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“I F O R G O T.”





"J F O R G O T;"

OR,

WILL LEONARD.

BY

MRS. FREDERICK FIELD,

AUTHOR OF "I DIDN'T HEAR," "BY AND BY," ETC., ETC.




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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
I	
SHORT MEMCRIES,	9
II	
WILL-O'-THE-WISP,	34
III.	
DOORS AND GATES,	59
IV.	
HOW JOHNNY AND WILL DID ERRANDS,	83
V.	
DUMB SUFFERERS,	106
VI.	
POOR JUNO,	142
VII.	
MORE FORGETFULNESS,	158
VIII.	
WHIP-POOR-WILL,	185
IX.	
A LETTER,	206

I Forgot



I FORGOT.

I.



SHORT MEMORIES.

OUR young Leonards were all of them naturally gifted with good minds, so, as memory is a very prominent part of our intellectual nature, they were by no means deficient in it. There was a difference certainly, in its mode of action. Harry seldom forgot a form or a place, while Alice remembered best the beautiful ideas which she had read or heard, especially if they were poetically expressed. Johnny remembered accurately whatever he tried to learn, and was a little too much inclined to commit his lessons to memory, word for word; while

Will found nothing so hard as to get even a few verses from the New Testament fastened *verbatim* into his mind, but at the same time remembered the ideas perfectly if he only understood them, and had a capital memory for whatever interested him. Yet notwithstanding this excellent condition of their faculties, one would have supposed to hear them talk that they were all subject to some curious mental disease, a sort of paralysis of the memory!

Harry, as the readers of his experiences know, was very much given to putting off whatever he had to do, and, as everybody is aware, people who do not do things at the right time are very apt not to do them at all. So "I forgot it," was if anything more frequently on his lips than "by and by." The way it generally happened was, that when he had anything to do, he *thought*, "I'll do it by and by," and when by and by he was asked why he had not done it, he would look fairly amazed, and *say*, "I declare I forgot it!" A I have told you elsewhere, he found his ex

ample very contagious, and the younger boys availed themselves of the same convenient excuse, and "forgot" daily, I should think about one third of the directions which were given to them; while the resolutions and engagements which they made of their own accord fared no better. Of course this made ever so much trouble to all the parties concerned, just about as much as if they had been wilfully disobedient and negligent. Yet there was not one of these children who would have said, "I won't," to his good father or mother, when he was directed to do anything. No, indeed! Such a thought never entered their heads; but, alas, for their good intentions! As far as results were concerned, they might just as well have said "I won't" in the first place. They only added falsehood to disobedience. Those are two pretty strong words, and they mean great sins. The children would have been grieved and indignant if any one had accused them of such wickedness, so little did they realize the true state of things.

But when Harry began so earnestly to try and be promptly obedient, and to reform all his old dilatory ways, there was the most delightful improvement in his memory. Indeed, when one's duties are performed at just the right time, there is very little occasion for any memory about them. One's head doesn't have to be like a great memorandum book, crammed full of things to be done; it is more like a pleasant record of good deeds accomplished.

Alice, too, as she grew older, and realized how much a little heedlessness on her part added to her dear mother's cares, was very anxious not to let anything keep her from remembering and fulfilling all her daily round of duties, and when one really tries to remember how impossible it is to forget!

They were so in earnest about this business of remembering, that they made out carefully, with their mother's help, lists of their daily duties, one for each day of the week, and tacked them up in their rooms, so that they could refresh their memories by reading them over

every morning. Of course, they forgot to look at them quite often, and they did not always remember to do everything that was written down, even when they had faithfully studied over their "reminders," as they called them. But I think it is better to mean to do right for ever so little a while, than not to make any good resolutions at all; and better to start right in the morning, even if one's zeal does flag in the burden and heat of the day.

They were fifteen years old now, when they wrote these, and had a deeper and stronger sense of the importance of having right habits, so they studied their tablets, and jogged each others memories, and tied strings around their fingers for extra reminders, and adopted all sorts of devices for stimulating their faculties. Let us go with them through a week and see how they succeed. It is Sunday morning, and in the early autumn. Alice's Sunday "reminder" reads thus:

"Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.'

"Rise with the bell, and dress very carefully.

"Learn verse from 'Daily Food.'

"Help mother all I can after breakfast.

"Review Sunday-school lesson.

"Dress for church, and try to think about better things while dressing.

"Try to listen to the sermon.

"Take care of Rosa an hour after dinner.

"Read just the right kind of books and papers, and not write any poetry."

Harry's "reminder" for the same day says with Alice's, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy;" but otherwise it reads somewhat differently. His first entry reads, "Get right straight up when the bell rings;" and there are three lines drawn under the "right straight up," which shows plainly how well he knew what his weak points were! Then the next line was, "Dress quickly so as to have time for better things," which was a very necessary reminder to Harry, who was always disposed to dally over his toilet. Then, "Take care of Prince and Juno and Julie." Then "Get ready for church;" and this was underlined as heavily as the getting "right

straight up," for Harry did so like to sit down with a book, after breakfast. Next came "Study Sunday-school lesson till church-time." Then, "Keep watch of my thoughts in church, and of my tongue when at home." Lastly there was this reminder, "Sit up when I am reading," and the "sit up" is marked very emphatically, for Harry was always lolling in rocking-chairs, or lounging on sofas, and reading something that was such very light reading that it didn't fatigue him in the least, and that could be easily comprehended when he was half-asleep.

And now for the day. Promptly at seven o'clock Johanna rang the bell to waken the sleeping household, and Alice, to whom getting up in the morning was no great trial, sprang up directly and commenced dressing. When she had partly buttoned her boots, she stopped suddenly, and got up to look after her "Daily Food," and so have the verse for the day to think about while she was finishing her toilet. The verse was—"I, even I am he that comforteth thee," and she repeated the



beautiful and precious promise over and over again, speaking softly, and with a happy look on her fair young face that showed she felt the sweetness of the words. Then she went on with her dressing; but noticing how still it was yet in Harry's room, which was only separated from hers by a partition, she tapped on the wall, and called, "Why don't you make more noise, Harry?"

"Oh, I never snore!" answered Harry; but having thus acknowledged that he was still in a snoring position, he, too, got up and stamped about vigorously, to convince Alice that he was really stirring.

Alice talked to her canary as she combed and brushed her hair, and set him off in a transport of singing by opening the window and hanging the cage in the sun. She could not help singing herself, as the fresh morning air and sunshine filled the room.

"The morning bright, with rosy light,
Hath waked me from my sleep;
Father, I own thy love alone,
Thy little one doth keep."

She sang the whole hymn in low, sweet tones, and felt every word. Then she took her Bible and sat down in her favorite low chair. Harry, too, had opened his window and his heart to the sweet Sabbath sunshine, and had sat down to his Bible-reading. They were beginning the day aright.

After a little, Alice went in to see if Johnny and Will were ready for breakfast, and found that Will had already gone down stairs, while Johnny sat on the floor with his hands clasped about his knees, lost in meditation, and by no means ready for the next bell. Alice always had a great deal of sympathy for Johnny, she had been so subject to such fits of abstraction herself, so she woke him up, and gave him a start in the right direction. Then she opened his window, and threw off the bed-clothes, as her morning custom was, and went in to Harry's room on the same errand, just as the breakfast-bell rang.

They all gathered at the pleasant morning meal, fresh and smiling, and yet with a softened tone, both in manner and conversation, that

told the reverence in which all had been trained to keep the sacred day. Once in a while Will would forget, and bubble over in his usual style; but even he was not insensible to the quiet Sunday influence.

After prayers, Harry and Alice went briskly about their morning tasks, according to their "reminders," Alice washing the glass and silver, while Harry went to the barn.

Mr. Leonard always went with Harry on Sunday mornings. It was his only opportunity to make acquaintance with their much-valued domestic animals, and they all really seemed to appreciate the attention. Johnny and Will too, were beginning to share in this care of the horses and cow, and so Harry found his duties by no means heavy burdens.

Next, on Harry's list, came "Get ready for Church," and, on Alice's, "Review Sabbath-school lesson;" but when Harry came in from the barn, he found Alice still with her sleeves pinned up, but with a New York *Independent* spread out before her on the dining-room table, over which she was leaning, in a not

very comfortable position, but entirely oblivious of all things else, while she read first one and then another of its interesting articles. Her example was quite irresistible, and so he came and stood beside her, looking over her shoulder, and getting as deeply interested as she was. There they read for nearly half an hour, and nobody knows how much longer they would have stayed reading and talking if that ever-watchful "reminder," their good mother, had not happened in, and brought them to their senses! Away they ran now to their own rooms, and, by extra speed, were ready to join their father and mother at church time; but Alice had not helped her mother so much as she meant to, and Harry's Sabbath-school lesson had been hurried somewhat.

During sermon-time, although, to all outward appearance, they were not forgetting their rules about listening to the sermon, and indeed, were perfect models of good church-behaviour, I fear it would hardly have pleased them afterward to read over an accurate re-

cord of their thoughts. Would it do for any of us to be put to such a test?

After dinner Alice remembered her plan to entertain Rosa for an hour or two, and devoted herself to the little woman with the most gratifying success. The result was Mrs. Leonard had an undisturbed hour of reading with her husband, which was to her one of the rarest and most delightful of privileges.

Meanwhile Harry took the *Independent*, over which he had been so forgetful in the morning, and again forgot his "reminder," and lay down on the lounge to enjoy the paper. Pretty soon Alice noticed his attitude, and jogged his memory with, "Look out for your spinal column, Harry," and he straightened up with an apologetic look, and an "I forgot." But every few moments down he would go into a recumbent posture, only to jerk himself up again, until his patience was exhausted, and he very wisely went and sat in a straight-backed chair.

Pretty soon Alice, sitting on the carpet and building a log-house for Rosa, who had not

begun to keep the Sabbath in a very strict way as yet, found her thoughts had been as crooked as Harry's back—she had been planning all about the trimming of a new dress, and she fairly blushed at the thought of her forgetfulness of the Holy Day.

After this came the usual Sabbath afternoon talk with her father, in which Harry was as much interested as herself, for they were reading together "The Land and the Book," and it formed the subject of the afternoon's conversation. There was but little temptation to either of them to read anything unprofitable, or to talk about unsuitable things while these delightful volumes lasted for Sunday reading.

They went to church in the evening, and afterward walked home together in the clear, beautiful Autumn star-light.

'What a lovely, lovely day it has been!' said Alice; "and see the stars, Harry, they seem like sleepless eyes forever watching us.'

"Yes," said Harry, "I always wish I was better when I look at them. I wish a fellow could be good right along, without making

such hard work of it. I wish I didn't forget all the time."

"Oh! you don't forget all the time, only sometimes," said Alice; "and I suppose everybody does that. One can't always remember."

When they were sitting in the parlor at home, a few moments later, talking over the meeting, Harry suddenly appealed to his father, "Is it wrong to forget?" he asked.

"Certainly, it is wrong to forget what we ought to remember," answered the father. "There is a great difference in people's memories, no doubt," he added, "but we may all be sure of this, we each *can* remember what we *ought* to remember, if we only make sufficient effort. Some people seem to think that saying 'I forgot' is an unanswerable excuse for any neglect of duty, but it really only shows that one does not care enough about the duty to make a point of remembering it."

Then there was no more said, but Harry looked convinced, and not at all disposed to argue the point; so he and Alice took their

night lamps and, bidding their father and mother good-night, went up-stairs.

When Harry was in his own room he stood a moment before his "reminders," took the one for the Sabbath off from the nail, and put the one for Monday in its place. "There!" he said, "do you help me not to forget to-morrow."

Both he and Alice remembered, too, that there was one Source of help far more powerful than any of their own framing, however excellent these might be, and sought it earnestly and not in vain.

Their week-day "reminders" did not differ materially from each other. The duties of each day being very nearly the same. But the heading to each of Alice's was, "Be Attentive;" while Harry's was, "Be Prompt." Then followed an enumeration of home and school duties. Alice charged herself daily to remember and keep her thoughts on her studies in school hours, and Harry "reminded" himself that he was apt to put off the hardest lessons till there was not time enough to learn them.

The result was that they did remember far better than of old, and their mother found that where she used to have to remind them a score of times every day of something that they were forgetting to do at the right time, now she only occasionally had to speak to them. It was an immense relief to this patient and vigilant supervisor, not to have to charge her mind with these young folks' duties and responsibilities, and she told them so with tears of loving happiness standing in her gentle eyes as she kissed them good-night on one of the evenings of this week about which I am telling.

"I think your memories are improving wonderfully," she said.

"Well, mother," said Harry, "I presume there was room enough for improvement in our memories, but I've been thinking that they were not so much in fault after all. If a fellow only does a thing right off when his memory gives him the *first* jog! There's where the trouble is with me at any rate. I let my memory get chock full instead of only

having a fair amount of things in it, and then, of course, it loses some and gets all mixed up!"

"That's it!" said Alice, laughing. "It's a thousand times easier to have some order about everything we do, and so only have one thing at a time to remember, and you've told us so a million of times, you dear old mother!"

Then came Saturday, and our young people each had extra things to do on that day. Harry went to Benton for his father; and Alice had to sweep and dust and mend her stockings, which she did just as faithfully, I am happy to say, as if Aunt Huldah had never told her that poetesses did not, as a rule, keep their hose in good condition! She felt very virtuous and praiseworthy as she darned away, and heartily wished Aunt Huldah herself would happen in!

There was one "reminder" for Saturday that her mother considered of the utmost importance. It was, "Regulate drawers, closet, and work-box." For Alice, although she liked to be neatly and carefully dressed, was often



in too much of a hurry to hang up her dresses in the most approved way, or to keep her collars and ribbons and laces all smooth and ready for wear. She would often go flying up-stairs, just before school-time, after some particular bit of ribbon for her hair or neck, toss things right and left in a search for it, and then run away and leave her boxes looking as if a whirlwind had swept through them.

Then her work-box; but everybody knows how work-boxes fare, especially school-girls' work-boxes!

Well, sometimes when Alice was in just the mood for it, she enjoyed having a good "clearing-up spell," but at other times it was a great nuisance, and on this particular Saturday, she had a charming book that she and her dear friend, Lily Grover, had made an arrangement to read together, so she kept thinking of that, and bending all her energies to getting ready for this delightful reading. She was in altogether too much of a hurry to remember anything that was as little forced

upon her notice as closed bureau drawers, and shut-up closets; so as soon as possible after dinner, she made a rapid toilet and ran away to her friend Lily. When she came home it was almost dark, and directly after tea she had a lesson to prepare for school on Monday morning, and then a Sabbath-school lesson to study, so it was nine o'clock when she went up-stairs, and, as usual, read over her list of duties for the day. When she came to "regulate drawers, closet and work-box," she gave an exclamation of dismay. "Oh, forlorn!" she said, "if I haven't forgotten all about that." Next on the list was, "Bathe, put on clean clothes, and pick up everything I wish to put in the wash." She had dressed in far too great a hurry to do all that, so again she ejaculated, "Dear me! there's another forget." She set down her lamp and began to consider. How dreadfully tired she was. How she wished she hadn't been so "crazy" about that book! She concluded that late as it was she would attend to the bathing etc. "It serves me right," she thought, "to have

to go poking round in the night after tubs and towels! It'll help me to remember next time."

But there was no time to arrange her drawers, and they were in a fearful jumble. As to the things for the wash, she forgot to look in her pockets for handkerchiefs, or in her drawers for soiled collars and cuffs, and as a natural consequence, found herself on a very short allowance of these articles the week after.

Harry meanwhile, had got home from Benton, and been out hunting in the afternoon. He came home about sundown with a grey squirrel and a pair of quails in his game-bag, which he proceeded to dress himself, for Johanna never could be persuaded to touch the "harmless little craythurs wid their poor little dead eyes," and Mrs. Leonard sympathized with her; yet they were none of them squeamish about eating broiled quails or squirrel pot-pie.

Then Harry, although he was tired enough, went to his room and attended to his prescribed course of bathing and dressing; for which

extra effort he felt well repaid when his mother said to him, as they went out to tea together, "How nicely you look, my boy!"

Now if he had only stayed at home after tea and attended to those lessons with Alice, how triumphantly he would have rounded out his week; but as it was, he thought after tea he would just step round to Ned Wilcox's a few minutes, and then come home and see to the studying. Once there, however, he found so much to interest him in the charming society of his friend Ned, to say nothing of the attractions of Ned's pretty sister, that he forgot all about his evening duties, and at nine o'clock waked up to a consciousness that the evening was gone! When he reached home, Alice was already in her own room, and although he blinked away for awhile over his lessons, he was altogether too tired and sleepy to have it amount to much. Besides, he never could study without Alice, and he shut up his book quite disgusted with himself, "It is always so," he thought; "I never really get through a whole day just right."

"No, my dear Harry, and you never will; but it is best to set one's standard high, and keep trying, notwithstanding all shortcomings; that is the way to "go on unto perfection." This was in substance what his mother said to him, as she noticed his trouble, and divined its cause. "You had better go to bed now," she said, "and try and make up for lost time to-morrow morning, and on Monday." Which good advice, Harry followed, and although it was "like pulling teeth," he was up and at his Sunday-school lesson before breakfast the next morning!

So Harry and Alice were in a fair way to keep their memories in a very healthy condition. They were both *trying* to remember.

But Johnny was the queerest little fellow about forgetting! He was a good boy, a very good boy—they were all sure of that—but he was made to run in a groove. Change the order of his exercises and he was lost. He hadn't the vaguest idea of time. It was really ridiculous what mistakes he made in this direction. He was a model boy about not doing

forbidden things, and so would never think of going anywhere without special permission but, when once he had leave to go, his time of returning was among the uncertainties. His mother would give him leave, for instance, to go and spend an hour or two with his good friend, old Christine Brethschneider. "Now, tell Christine to let you know when the time is gone," would be Mrs. Leonard's parting injunction.

"Yes, mother," would be Johnny's honest reply. But if, by chance, there was something to take up his mind so that he did not think to tell Christine how long he could stay, half a day would go by, and the very first intimation that Johnny would seem to have as to the flight of time, would be Adam's coming home to dinner or to tea. Then Johnny would begin to look about for his hat, and when they urged him to stay and eat with them, although he dearly loved Christine's savory stews and sauer-kraut, yet he would steadfastly refuse to stop. "Mother said I must only stay an hour," he would say, with

as innocent and obedient air as if he had exactly fulfilled her wishes!

"Why, thou dear child," Christine would exclaim, in unaffected astonishment, "it was five hours ago you came! Run home to the good mother!"

And away Johnny would go, utterly amazed at the rapid flight of time.

His mother understood his peculiarities, and when reproving him, always tried to remember just what he was responsible for, and in what respects his faults were those of temperament. Neither was she one of those who think it is a sufficient excuse for wrong-doing to say, "It is my nature to do so." She thought we were all pretty weak and erring naturally, and it was our business to improve our natures.

Surely where Johnny's bump of Time ought to have been, there was a hollow! But all the more was there a great need of impressing upon him the importance and value of time, and its unceasing and rapid flight. So she used to set him down before the clock and

have him tell her when one minute was gone, and five and ten ; and call his attention to the striking of the hours, so that he should not forget how long an hour was. •

As to meal times, he had such a capital appetite he could guess very nearly when they had arrived ; but, strange to say, would often astonish his mother, within an hour after dinner, with the question—"Have we had dinner?"

This funny forgetfulness of his was often a puzzle to his teachers, and sometimes he did not get as gently dealt with as his mother would have thought best ; but Johnny was a philosopher, and did not let his feelings be unnecessarily wounded.

As to Will's memory, I will have to take a whole chapter to do it justice.





II.

WILL-O'-THE-WISP.

OF the memorable babyhood of Master Willoughby Leonard, the readers of "I Didn't Hear" have heard somewhat. A babyhood remarkable for tears and cries, wakefulness, and, what may be termed, a general uneasiness. He survived it, however, and, in deed, did not seem in the least exhausted by it. Like a blacksmith's muscles, his lungs and his limbs had only improved by use. "When he can walk," his mother often had thought, "he will run off his superfluous nervous energy, and tire himself out, so that he will be glad to sleep at night, and to be still sometimes in the daytime." But when the little

man got on to his feet (which he did at ten months' old), she did not discover that there was any particular difference, except that he got into more trouble and mischief than before. She had to put him into leading-strings literally, and devote herself to him more constantly than ever. He was a terrible infant! But by and by he did get so that he slept at night, and the mother could begin in the morning, with rested muscles, quieted nerves and fresh energies. So did Will; and he would fairly outdo himself in climbing and tumbling, and in running and racing. He was like some frisky young animal, alert, agile, full of life and motion, and he was, fortunately, like young animals in other respects. He was so sharp and quick-witted that he could almost always save himself from the dangers that beset his headlong career. When he fell, he almost invariably came down safely on his feet, like a very spry kitten!

They named him "Will-o'-the-Wisp," and finding it didn't do much good to follow him up with endless "take cares," they finally

rather abandoned him to his guardian angel and his own nimble faculties ! Mrs. Leonard was such an anxious, careful mother, that it was only under protest, and, as a last resort, that this was done. It was really impossible to keep an eye on this fleet-footed and active-brained little mortal. The only restriction that Mrs. Leonard finally settled down upon was that he should stay within their yard, which was large enough certainly to satisfy even a roaming nature. Of course there were times every day when he might go with some one out into the street, and he would often have special permission to go to play with some of his little friends in their own yards or homes. All that his mother insisted upon was that she should know his whereabouts, and if he went out of the yard, it was to be with her knowledge and consent. He was five years old when these limits were set to his career, and he was made to thoroughly understand the arrangement. Most children of his age would not have found these restrictions very severe, but Will felt like a caged bird ! Right

next door ived his dear little crony, Robby Noble, and why must he be forbidden to clamber over the door-yard fence twenty times a day and join Robby in his sports! The reason did not appear obvious to Will at all; but his mother and Robby's had both discovered that two heads were better than one as regards mischief, as well as for other purposes, and so they decided to try and keep them apart a little, except when some older person could have an oversight of their performances.

Then there were most attractive dogs and horses, and shows of every description frequently passing in the street, and they could be seen to so much better advantage if one might only go out of the gate and follow them for a short distance down the street.

Also there were most delightful visiting places all about—at good Mrs. Brethschneider's, where he always was treated to seed cakes; at black Jacob's, where the little dark-skinned children were overjoyed to see him, and were the jolliest and best-natured of playmates; and at little Mike Phency's, with whom

Will was on the most friendly terms, notwithstanding he had a dreadful mother who used to get drunk, and whom Will's brother Harry had named the Feejee, on account of her protruding teeth, and general savageness of look and manner. Will made no nice distinctions, and he saw much to admire in Mike Pheney, if his mother was a Feejee.

So when Will was shut up in the doorway, he longed after forbidden pleasures, and thought he would venture out a little and risk the consequences.

It was lovely summer weather, and he and his brother Johnny were playing with a little wheelbarrow and the chips that were scattered around the wood-pile. Johnny and he never did get on well together. They did not like the same things nor the same way of doing things. They were no more alike than if they had had different parents and been reared on opposite sides of the globe. Will was black-eyed, dark-haired, brown-skinned, and was sharp-featured and thin in flesh. Johnny was yellow-haired, blue-eyed, fair, and with a broad, stur-

dy face and figure. He found abundant scope for all his feelings and faculties within the bounds their mother had set. He planned now to get all the chips in a nice convenient pile, and with Will's help was making good progress. But pretty soon Will's zeal began to flag. It was a great deal more in accordance with his feelings to set chips flying in every direction than to gather them up in an orderly way, so he began to throw them this way and that in a fashion that taxed poor Johnny's patience to its fullest extent. He tried coaxing, scolding, and at last a vigorous push, which was duly resented, and so there resulted a pitched battle, the report of which being brought in to mamma, she rushed to the scene of conflict and separated the combatants. It was evident that, as usual, there were two sides to the story, so after reproofing both parties, and settling the difficulty, as she thought, she went back to her sewing, and left the boys to themselves. But the spirit of work had departed from Will, and he left Johnny in undisturbed possession of both



wheelbarrow and chips, while he went clambering over the fence into the next yard. Here he found his friend Robby harnessing a kitten to a little tin wagon. This was sport enough, and although Will had not forgotten the rule about leaving his own yard when he first went over the fence, he soon succeeded in banishing all thoughts of law or punishment. They trained the poor kitten in a manner which, while it was fun for them, came very near being death to pussy. In her wild efforts to escape, she got the strings entangled around her neck in such a way that each new plunge tightened the halter—choking, gasping, struggling—all would have been over with poor kitty in a moment more if Mrs. Noble had not seen the condition of things and flown to the rescue.

“Give me your knife quick!” she cried, to Robby, “and Will, do you get over the fence into your own yard, and stay there!”

She spoke with energy, not to say severity, and Will scrambled hastily into his own inclosure.

"There, sir," said Johnny, "now you'll have to stay in the house to-morrow!"

Will leaned back against the fence and devoted as much as a minute to thought. Should he go in and tell his mother that he had forgotten? Should he try to get Johnny to promise not to tell of him, or should he just make a day of it now that he had begun, and take the consequences to-morrow?

I am happy to say that he decided to throw himself on his mother's well known tender mercies. So he went in and confessed. "I forgot," he said, when his mother asked, "How could you do so, Will?" And by that I do not know that he meant to tell a falsehood. Perhaps he thought that what he forgot was not the fact that he was forbidden to go out of the yard, but that it was so very wrong to disobey. At any rate he so won upon his mother's feelings by his honest confession, that she told him she would forgive him just that once, and let him go with the caution not to forget again.

So Will sallied forth and began to walk

around the yard on the top of the fence. It was a picket fence, made in the usual way, with a narrow board running along on the inside nearly at the top of the pickets, and to which they were nailed; so his pathway was very narrow and beset with dangers; this made walking there a very lively and hazardous undertaking for a five-year-old, and he came very near enjoying himself! But right before his eyes, now that he had so high a position, he could see his friend Mickey Phenev down in a back lot where the ground was marshy, with his ragged trowsers rolled well up on his sturdy limbs, wading around in a most inviting-looking mud puddle. Will paused in his acrobatic performances every time he came around where he could see Mickey, and gazed at him with envious eyes. The spectacle grew more and more enticing, especially when Mickey recognized him and beckoned to him from afar. The temptation overcame him entirely at last, and away he went. He was neatly dressed in a suit of light gray cassimere, and his mother had charged him again and again

to be very careful of his clothes, but wnoever knew a boy of Will's character to remember such injunctions? So down he sat on the edge of the mud puddle and pulled off his shoes and stockings, that he might be as unfettered as Mickey, and then into the water he went, as if he had been a duck and that was his native element. Then began the liveliest kind of a game. The soft black mud was the most charming of play-grounds! They made impressions of their heels and toes and entire feet in it; they splashed about in the water to their heart's content; they ran races in it and tried to see who could make the most of a commotion! Finally, Will slipped down in it, and arose—a spectacle! Just then he heard Johanna ringing the dinner-bell at the back door for his and Johnny's benefit, and as dread of coming troubles was no part of Will's mental characteristics, he picked up his shoes and stockings and went home to meet his fate. Johanna saw him coming and held up her hands and poured forth such a mingled volley of exclamations and lamentations over his ap-

pearance, that his mother came running to the door. What an object met her gaze! I think she would have cried over his naughtiness and the ruin of his clothes, if it hadn't been such hard work to keep from laughing at his truly ludicrous condition! As it was, she got him in doors and into a tub of water as soon as possible.

"Oh, Will! How could you be so naughty again, and so soon!" she exclaimed, as she rubbed and brushed and put clean garments on her wayward boy.

"I forgot," said Will, thinking that the usual plea might answer again, or perhaps not thinking at all, but only making the first reply that suggested itself.

"No, you did not forget, Will. How can you say so?" she cried. "You knew perfectly well that you were doing very wrong. Now I shall keep you in the house this afternoon and to-morrow. I must make you remember this."

She kept her word and punished both herself and him by confining his mischief to in-

door performances for the next forty-eight hours. It was really dreadful what she and Johanna and that wretched prisoner went through with during that period. Time would fail me to tell of the trials and tribulations that each endured; but they came to an end, and Will was free again. Now, thought the mother, he will surely not forget again very soon, but she cautioned him and warned him before she let him go, holding both his little tanned hands in hers, and trying to keep his dancing eyes steady by her own steadfast looks.

“Mayn’t Harry take me to the mill?” pleaded the restless manikin, within fifteen minutes of his release, “I know I thall run away if he don’t!”

The mother was ready to do anything to avert such another proceeding, so she said, “Yes, if you will stay with Harry, and do just as he tells you.”

Will promised, and Harry reluctantly set forth. But Will’s confinement had subdued his spirit a little, and Harry found his task not

so great as he expected. To be sure Will was never satisfied to stand still and look at anything five minutes, he must be doing something in order to be happy, and Harry had to keep very close watch of him. Still he was quite tractable, and Harry got him safely home after an hour or two. He was neither drowned nor ground, and it had been an immense gratification to him, as well as relief to his mother. After that Harry was deputed at least once a day to take him to the mill for a change of scenery and occupation; and his mother would often take him a little walk herself; and Alice would devote an hour or two to entertaining him and Johnny with a story or a game, and every time anybody went to the corner grocery on an errand, great pains were taken to give Will an opportunity to escape for a few moments from his narrow confines.

Yet with all this care and thoughtful management that boy would run away!

Every few days Johanna would put her head into the parlor with, "If ye plaze, mum, Will is

missin," for she was charged with a general oversight of the premises, and was told to report immediately any disappearance. Then a search would begin. Johnny would be questioned in the first place, but his ideas of Will's whereabouts were always extremely vague. He had plenty of business of his own on hand without being his brother's keeper. Then Harry would search the barn, and after it was positively ascertained that he was not on the premises, Alice would go to the different neighbors, Harry to the mill, and Johanna into the by-ways and such places as were mostly frequented by such spirits as Mickey Pheney. It must be confessed that these latter places were Will's favorite resorts. What wretched spirit of roving, or what depraved longings after forbidden fruit possessed the boy, nobody knew; but the fact remained the same—run away he did, and run away he would! He was talked to and reasoned with—he was coaxed—he was hired and he was faithfully punished, and yet the dreadful fact remained the same, he would run away! And

he never gave any better reason for his escapades than, "I forgot." Think of it! "Forgot," indeed! No wonder Johanna used to exclaim, "Did you ever hear the likes of it?" Just picture him freshly brought home from one of these excursions, torn, dirty, and with his hat set conveniently on the back of his head.

Mother.—"Now Will, what does this mean? Where did you find him, Johanna?"

Johanna.—"On the top o' Pheney's cowshed, a slidin' on the boards wid a couple o' the wildest lookin' little tramps I ever see, an' sez I—"

Mother.—"Never mind, Johanna, thank you very much. I'll see him now. Tell me, Will, what does make you do so?"

Will.—"I dunno—I forgot."

It was truly exasperating, and Mrs. Leonard might have said with the prophet Jonah, "I do well to be angry!" But the depths of motherly forbearance have never yet been sounded; and again she patiently washed the little culprit, mended his clothes, and kept

him in solitary confinement for another day. He was a study for a mental philosopher, and Mrs. Leonard was a good deal of a philosopher, but he puzzled her. He was as affectionate and warm-hearted as he was reckless and roving. He never showed the least resentment at his punishment, although it was to him worse than a dozen whippings. He seemed to have a perfect sense of its justice, and made no attempts at self-defense. The only idea he seemed to have was that unlimited freedom was so charming that he would risk all its dangers, and endure any bad results that might come.

Well, something happened one day. Something generally does happen when a good mother is perplexed and troubled and cannot think what to do next. All summer long they had pursued this young vagrant, and very little improvement had resulted from all their efforts to reform him, and now it was October, and little Rosa was adding to the household cares, so that not quite so close a watch could be kept over Will. A strolling organ-grinder,

with an enticingly smart little monkey, came down the street by Mr. Leonard's, and Will's weakness showed itself once more. Out he ran, and down the street he followed the crowd of idle boys, who, in a little place like Clear Rapids, always run after "the man with the monkey." Will found his friend Mickey and little black Jake, and other cronies, and was "hail fellow, well met," with them all. He kept in the constantly-growing crowd, stopping before houses and at street corners, liking the music well enough, but the monkey better, till he nearly reached the corner from where his father's mill and office were in plain sight. Then, either because he was a little afraid his father's eye might discover him among the crowd, or because he had about as much of the entertainment as he cared for, he held a little consultation with Mickey, and the two turned down a back street toward the river—the dreadful river, which was Mrs. Leonard's great terror, and which Mr. Leonard used to tell her he verily believed ran through half her dreams. Its swift current

seemed to her so danger-fraught that scarcely a day went by when she did not warn the children against going near its banks. But thither strolled Will and Mickey. Will, no doubt, had an undercurrent of uneasiness, but now that he had gone out of the yard, he thought he might as well go farther, and so trotted along gaily, as if there were no such things as laws or penalties in the world. There was a dam a little way above the mill over which the water fell in great shining curves, most beautiful for either old eyes or young to look upon, and here the little truants went and gathered together a pile of chips and sticks to throw into the rapid current of the stream just above the dam, and then watch their swift plunge over the fall. It was magnificent sport, and they enjoyed it beyond measure for awhile, but, ere long, they grew tired of even this, and strayed along to the mill. Adam Brethschneider saw them, and was suspicious that, with Will, it was a case of vagrancy, so he questioned him a little. "Does the good mother know where is her Wilhelm?"

"I —— gueth tho," answered Will somewhat hesitatingly.

"Better run home," advised Adam, kindly; but he knew that the little fellow was often there with Harry, and so thought, perhaps, he would take care of himself, and did not urge the matter of his going home. He saw them around the mill awhile, but soon lost sight of them, and thought his advice had been followed. But the boys had only gone around to the backside of the mill, where there was the ever-attractive sight of a great swift mass of water pouring from a flume on to the great wheel of the mill. It was always delightful to the boys to stand and see the rush and commotion of the water, and the slowly-revolving, ever-dripping wheel. At first they were satisfied just to watch all this; then they threw some sticks in back of the flume, and watched them toss and beat against the bars, as if eager to follow the current of the water. Then they looked about for some new excitement. There had been heavy fall rains, and an equinoctial storm of unusual severity, so

that the water was very high. Part of the flume had given way before the pressure, and the men had been repairing the damage. A heavy plank was carelessly left lying across from the bank of the stream to the flume—one end resting on the water's edge, the other on the timbers at the side of the flume—so that it made a bridge; and out on this those reckless little adventurers went. The plank was wet and slippery, but they managed to keep their foothold until they reached the flume. Then Mickey commenced to walk along on the edge of it, holding on to the upright bars which formed the backside, and walking on a small piece of timber which was nailed across the bars to help keep them in position, and which lay just at the water's edge. Two or three times he went back and forth safely, while Will knelt on the end of the plank, which projected over the edge of the flume, and paddled in the water with one hand. Mickey grew bold with his success, and finally stood upright without touching the bars. "Hurrah!" shouted Will, in admiration.

“Hooray!” cried Mickey, and pulled off his torn cap to wave in the air; but, in the act, he lost his balance, reeled, fell, clutching wildly at Will as he passed him, and, in an instant, both boys were in the water! Poor little Mickey’s head struck against the edge of the plank as he fell, and, in a moment, his grasp of Will relaxed, and he drifted down under the gate of the flume, under the great wheel—to Death. While Will rose to the surface, half strangled, wild with terror, but with a frantic instinct left which led him to catch at the end of the projecting plank, and, almost as by a miracle, he clung to the slippery edge. As soon as he could catch his breath, a piercing scream rang through the mill, heard by all the men, above the noise of the rushing water and machinery. Adam heard it. “My God, it is the child!” he said, and, in a moment, was outside the mill, looking this way and that. Another scream; and now it came plainly from the flume. Before there was time for another, every man was rushing out of the mill, but only to see Adam

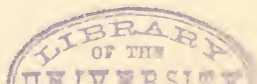
coming across the plank with the limp burden in his arms. All breath and strength had left poor Will's body the moment Adam's strong hands seized him.

One of the men ran for Mr. Leonard, and, in an instant, Adam had transferred the half-drowned boy to his father's arms. Then Adam, for the first time, thought of Mickey, and, with white lips, said to the group of men, "There was another child!"

Will slowly opened his eyes, and after a moment realized what had happened. His first thought was of poor Mickey. "Mickey is out there," he moaned, and hid his face in his father's breast.

Then there was wild confusion—men running to and fro and scanning the water eagerly both above and below the mill, while the object of their search—poor little Mickey's body, with the life, the bright young life, crushed out of it forever—slowly drifted down the stream.

Mr. Leonard silently put Will in the arms of one of the men and motioned to him to take



him home ; then he, too, joined in the search. In the course of an hour or two they found that which they sought at a little bend in the stream, where it had washed ashore. The little white face, unharmed and most beautiful in its repose, and the small bare feet crossed in an attitude of careless grace. Their roving was all ended.

A wide board was brought, and the rough men took him up tenderly, covered him with one of their coats, and then bore him sadly homeward.

Will saw them as they went slowly by, and with a great sob laid his face down again on his pillow. He had been thoroughly warmed, rubbed and rolled up in hot blankets by his poor pale mother ; and now he lay beside her on the bed. He heard her say, "God help them!—God pity his poor mother!" and as well as so young a child could, he appreciated the awful meaning of her words. He was in such an agony of grief that his mother tried to soothe and comfort him, and he clung to her hand as if he would never let go of it again.

"I will never, never, never run away again," he whispered at last when he could speak.

His father talked with him very kindly, but seriously, that night. He had just come from the home where there was such wild sorrow and lamentation, and so he told Will of the anguish he had seen and sympathized with so deeply, and reminded him how very narrow had been their escape from just such grief. He talked with him, too, of his great sin, and poor Will did not offer his usual plea of forgetfulness. In the depths of his penitence he saw plainly that there was wicked carelessness back of the forgetfulness.

"And now, my child," the father said, "I am going to forbid your coming to the mill again till I think you are old enough and careful enough to be trusted. It may be many years. Will you promise to obey me in this thing?"

"I don't *ever* want to go there again," Will answered.

That was the end of Will's running away. In the wretched home out of which little

Mickey had been taken, the Leonards did all that lay in their power to soften the dreadful presence of death, and lead the stricken household to the great Comforter, who "doth not willingly afflict," even the most sinful and debased of "the children of men." There was one symbol of faith and hope which these poor souls revered and clung to in their wild distress, and which must ever be the sweetest of all emblems to the loftiest as well as the lowliest soul. So while Mr. Leonard procured a beautiful casket for the remains of Will's poor little friend, and saw that they were carefully draped and tenderly laid in it, Mrs. Leonard made a Cross of lovely white flowers, and Alice went to the poor desolate hovel, and gave it to the mother to lay on the peaceful little breast that should never again know trouble or suffering.

"It was well with the child."





III.

DOORS AND GATES.

DOORS are very useful things—indeed they are among the necessities of civilization. Only savages try to get along without them; but is there any one thing about a house that makes so much trouble? They are always getting open when they ought to be shut, and shut when they ought to be open, and whoever knew a boy, or a girl either, for that matter, to always open and shut them gently?

I presume the young Leonards were quite as regardful of such matters as their neighbors, but it was surprising how they did forget about the doors! Their mother's rule

was, "*Leave doors as you find them,*" a very simple and excellent one, and one that it would seem might be very easily remembered, but they appeared to find it almost impossible to bear it in mind. All summer Mrs. Leonard liked to have her doors and windows open to the sunshine and the sweet fresh air, but it would take a whole summer full of teachings and requests to get the children trained to leave them open; and then cool weather would come and it would be just as necessary to have the doors shut, when lo, it would take all winter to get our young folks fixed in the habit of shutting them! All summer the mother wearied herself with, "Leave the door open, my dear;" "Run back and open the door, my boy;" and all winter she made herself hoarse with, "Shut the door!" "Oh, don't leave the door open!" "Remember the door!"

Then, in spite of the constant cry, "Gently, gently, my boy!" those boys used to come in as if they were pursued by a crazy man or a mad dog! And when they shut a door, they did it with an energy it was a great pity

couldn't have been given to some better purpose. They frequently, in going out, slammed the doors as if they were full of wrath at something or somebody, when in truth they were as happy and unruffled as possible! They used up door "fixings," and jarred plastering off from the walls at an astonishing rate. And it was all because they "forgot."

The winter of Rosa's babyhood was a very trying one in this respect. When a baby makes its entrance into a large and lively family circle, it usually accommodates itself to circumstances, and never minds the ordinary noise and confusion. But was there ever a baby who could sleep undisturbed when a door close to its head was banged with a report like a cannon? I trow not. So Rosa's naps were very frequently interfered with. It was really a serious matter. The little boys did not go to school, and so there was no respite from their constant in-comings and out-goings. The baby's rest was so disturbed that she was nearly driven to desperation for want of sleep, and when babies are in that

condition we all know how their mothers fare.

It is a blessing, generally speaking, to have one's senses all in perfection, but there was certainly some reason in Johanna's fervent exclamation one day, "Shure an' 'twould be a great blessin' if the child was intirely deaf!"

Yet they all admired and loved their darling little sister, and were really eager to show their devotion by doing something in her service. It is a great deal easier sometimes to do than not to do, especially if the doing is a brief affair, while the not doing includes constant watchfulness and self-control. It was a great deal easier to draw her about in her little carriage for an hour, or whistle and sing for her benefit, than it was to have a thought of her always on coming into the room, and open and shut the door gently, lest she might have her nap rudely broken up. The easiest way to come into the room was just to bounce in, and then when the mischief was all done, apologize with, "Oh, I forgot!"

and make it all right with the baby by smothering her with kisses.

It was cold weather now, and a cool breeze from an open door was not exactly the best thing for a tender baby lying asleep in a warm little nest of a cradle; and it certainly was quite the wrong thing for a baby tied in a high chair by a table, or propped up with pillows, playing on the floor. It took a vast amount of watchfulness and extra talking on the mother's part to keep poor little Rosa from constant exposure. Alice was a valuable ally. She loved the baby so tenderly that she did not forget about the doors herself, and she was ever ready to run and shut them after others. Harry, too, was somewhat more thoughtful than of old about these matters, but Johnny was so absent-minded and Will so frisky, that they needed the steady services of a porter, and the office fell upon Alice, when she was out of school. Yet notwithstanding the mother's care, and the efforts of the little portress, several times an open door chilled the baby through and through, and gave her

a dreadful cold. Nothing brought the boys to their senses so quickly as to hear the poor baby cry hoarsely, or cough. There would be great reforms sometimes for a few days.

Then there were the gates. If such a thing were possible, the children were more careless about the gates than they were about doors, for there was not half the opportunity for the mother to keep watch of them, and call them back when they had failed to remember and shut them. Mr. Leonard had weights put on them so that they drew shut of themselves, but gates that are opened and shut a hundred times a day frequently get out of repair, and when things got out of repair at Mr. Leonard's they often stayed so for many a week, waiting for the leisure day, which was always coming but never came. So it chanced that the gates were very often left at the mercy of the boys, and there was trouble enough as the result.

Mr. Leonard had a large yard, and he had set out a great many fruit and ornamental

trees. Among the latter were some beautiful Evergreens—Spruces and Pines and Firs, that he valued very highly. They reminded him of his old mountain home, and he was naturally anxious that they should be thrifty and well preserved. They had been brought from a distance and transplanted with the greatest care. Mr. Leonard had the good taste to have them left just as they grew, with the lower branches all untrimmed, so that they were perfect pyramids of verdure.

Then there were various other ornamental trees and shrubs scattered about the place, and in summer there was a nice vegetable garden, and borders of flowers, and nicely cut grass, so that the whole place looked lovely and inviting.

Clear Rapids was not yet sufficiently advanced towards a high state of cultivation to enforce a law compelling people to take care of their cattle, or even their swine; and not a day passed when some innocent-looking cow did not go wandering about the highways and bye-ways, ready to go in at any gate

which might stand invitingly open. Or some more ill-favored pig would hang around garden gates and back doors, seeking what it might devour. It was extremely necessary to keep fences well repaired, and gates carefully fastened, in this thrifty but unfinished little town. No boys knew this fact better than Harry and Johnny and Will Leonard, yet at many different times during the winters of their forgetful boyhood, they left the gate open, and before anyone observed the mischief that was being done, some old stray cow, after the evil fashion of her race, hooked off a quantity of the lower branches of those precious evergreen trees! Then the boy who had been guilty of the carelessness, if the fault could be traced to any particular boy, would be so sorry that he "forgot," and so very sure that he would remember in future, that one couldn't help having faith in him. But after a day or two there would be the gate again open, and perhaps, the very same boy in fault—especially if that boy was Will, as it was the larger part of the time. The

fate of all those evergreens was to be trimmed up about as high as a cow's head could reach!

In summer, more than once, there was dreadful havoc made in the garden by some marauding cow or pig that found the gate left open, as if for the express purpose of giving them easy entrance. The early cabbages would vanish like early dew, and the beets and turnips and other roots would be rooted beyond all recovery! Poor Alice's flowers, after one of these visitations, would be a wreck of broken stems and trampled leaves. The work of weeks would be undone in a few hours or even a few moments. It was melancholy enough! The boys, strange to say, would sometimes wreak their vengeance on the poor animals who had unwittingly trespassed in this way—just as if they were to blame for following out the instincts of their nature and eating that which their appetites craved and which was placed before them! Think of beating and stoning and otherwise abusing the poor dumb brutes for such offences as these! Mrs Leonard would not allow it.

But what ought to have been done to those careless boys? They were proper subjects for penalties. Mr. and Mrs. Leonard used to feel fairly discouraged sometimes, but when they discovered that all their friends' children were more or less afflicted with these same short memories, they concluded that it must be the weak point of all small brains, and so went on in the good old way which has been practiced in all ages and climes in similar cases. They urged and entreated, coaxed and hired, rewarded and punished, just as your good father and mother, my dear little reader, are probably trying to correct your heedlessness.

Their labor was not wholly in vain. Year by year the children improved. They grew more thoughtful of their parents and of each other. When Harry had the care of the garden vegetables given to him, he was thirteen years old, and it was observed that he never left the gates open afterward—so strong a motive is the knowledge that it is one's own particular interests that are going to suffer if one

is negligent. Johnny by that time, too, was getting some good habits fixed, and habits were strong points with Johnny. But Will, poor Will-o'-the-Wisp! what could be expected of a boy so intangible as he? Even when he was nine years old he left the barn door wide open one cold winter night, and thereby gave poor old Prince a lung-fever, while the pretty pony Julie only escaped because she was of Canadian birth, and had been "left out in the cold" before.

Will had a perfect genius, as any one might guess, for putting things out of place, and then forgetting what he had done with them. His handkerchiefs used to disappear like magic. Alice would hem half-a-dozen for him, and his mother would mark them with the utmost care, and he was exhorted to be very, very careful not to even lay one down anywhere, but always to return it to one of his pockets, (he was provided with no less than four of these, each one deep and capacious) yet of those six handkerchiefs, in three months time not one would be left! What did he do with

them? Whither did they vanish? He never knew himself. His only answer when questioned as to where they could possibly have gone was, "I guess I laid 'em down somewhere and forgot!"

Nor did his playthings fare any better. His mother once counted, just for the sake of the statistics, "to point a moral or adorn a tale," the number of balls he had had that she could distinctly remember, before he was nine years old, and it was *eleven*; yet now he was feeling abused because all the other boys had got balls and he "hadn't got one nor had one since he could remember!"

Then his pocket-knives—it would take a separate volume to write their history! If all the jack-knives that he had sown around the fields and streets of Clear Rapids could only have "come up" and borne fruit, each after its kind, there would have been such a crop of jack-knives as would have seriously affected the market! I don't know but the effect would have been felt in Sheffield!

They, too, went with the handkerchiefs—
‘laid down somewhere and forgot.’”

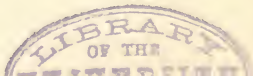
Mr. Leonard liked to keep a few tools and implements of labor on hand—a saw and axe, a hammer, hatchet and screw-driver, and a hoe, rake and spade, together with some smaller tools, like files and nippers and cork-screws. But it was a privilege that he was not allowed to enjoy. He was not restricted as to buying these articles; it was the keeping them that was so difficult. For Will loved to tinker, and had a mania for driving nails and sawing and splitting, and his practice in regard to tools was to leave them where he used them! That was frequently in some undreamed of place, that it would baffle his own memory to recall, and so it came to pass that everything in the way of tools was habitually missing.

Some fathers, I suppose, would have forbidden the little fellow to touch the tools after such exhibitions of carelessness; perhaps would have locked things up, and kept the key safe in their own pockets, but Will's father was tender-hearted, very, and poor Will must

do something, and had, like his brother Harry "such a coaxin' way wid him," as Johanna said, that refusal or severity seemed impossible to Mr. Leonard. So Will sawed and pounded away, and every few weeks his father bought a new hammer or a new hatchet, or some other of Will's favorite utensils. What did the boy do with them? Did he bury them up in the earth, or throw them into the river, or down the well? He declared solemnly that he did not, but certain it is they were seldom found. Once in a while a hammer would be spaded up in the garden—rusty and ancient-looking; and when the hay was pretty nearly gone in the spring, Harry would sometimes find quite a rich deposit of missing tools that had gathered in the loft of the barn during the winter; and spring-time pickings-up and clearings-away, in both wood-house and barn, often revealed long-lost treasures. But as a general thing when a hammer or hatchet disappeared, that was the last of it. There was a possibility that some of Will's vagrant friends were aware of his weaknesses and profited by his leavings

Will's standing explanation of his losses was that he didn't remember having the missing articles at all! But sometimes he seemed to have a dim recollection of laying them down somewhere for a few minutes while he turned his attention to some new employment, and then forget to go back after them!

Harry and Johnny were not as charitable and lenient towards Will as their father was. They kept their possessions away from the young destroyer with jealous care, after he had lost a knife or two for each of them, and sundry other valuables. Johnny, in particular, set a great value, as we know, on all his stores, and Will pleaded in vain for even a brief loan from Johnny's "strong box." He had a nice little tool-chest, also, well furnished with all sorts of most desirable implements, that his Uncle Harold had given him on a memorable Christmas, and Will would have been delighted to share in the use of its contents; but when it first came into Johnny's possession he let Will have the benefit of it one day, and he scattered the nice little shining tools so far



and wide that it was several days before all were found and restored to their original places. After that Johnny had no compassion or generosity towards poor Will. It did not look very kind and brotherly to a casual observer to see Will beg in vain for the use of a gimblet or saw "just a minute;" but to one who knew all the circumstances, I think Johnny's conduct was quite justified.

But Will felt abused, and did not fail to bestow upon Johnny the unflattering title of a "stingy old miser;" and he lisped when he said it, which with Will, at his present age of eight years, indicated strong emotion. The truth was, Will was so free with all his own possessions that he couldn't make any distinctions between prudence and meanness! He did not care who helped themselves to his playthings, and he did not always stop to ask leave before helping himself to other children's. Johnny, however, knew his views and practices, and kept his chest locked and the key in his own pocket. But one day he was in a great hurry to get to the mill with a

little water-wheel which he had been making, and which Adam had promised to help him set up in a safe place near the mill,—in so great a hurry that he forgot his usual custom and ran right away from the side of his tool-chest where he had been working, and left it not only unlocked but open. Will was roaming around, feeling very melancholy over the fact that his prohibition to go near the mill was still in force, when he went into the wood-house chamber, where Johnny had been at work. Here was a treasure-trove, indeed! He threw off his hat and commenced operations. He would make a wind-mill that should rival Johnny's water-wheel; and he planed and bored and whittled, as if he were handling his own utensils. In the course of an hour or two he had it completed, and then he decided to put it on the roof of the barn. Out he ran, and fixed the ladder up against the barn in a convenient position. Then he mounted it, scrambled up the roof, with his wind-mill in one hand and a hammer and nails in the other, and was ready to nail it

in the desired place, but his nail, he found, split the soft wood of the standard, and he decided he would use a screw instead. This would necessitate some new tools; so down he came after a gimblet, screw and screw-driver. "I'll just take the whole chest up there, he thought, and then I shan't have to come down again after anything." So up on the top of the barn went Johnny's precious tool-chest. Will fastened the wind-mill on now just to his mind, right on the gable-end of the barn, in a very breezy and conspicuous position. Of course, he perilled his precious neck, leaning over the edge of the barn-roof in a truly frightful way; but he came down safely, well pleased with his work, and left Johnny's tool-chest open, just out of sight, on the barn roof, and forgot all about it!

One of Will's peculiarities was to take no interest in anything after he had finished it. Did any of my young readers ever know a boy with such an unaccountable trait as that?

All day long he would be getting materials

together for some new box or cage or trap, bothering his father for screws and wires and certain kinds of boards; worrying Johanna and his mother about strings, and bits of leather and glue, which latter article he was sure to upset on the stove; and then all of another day he would be pounding and sawing and boring in the kitchen or the wood-house. But no matter how hard he worked, or how triumphant he was over what he succeeded in making, within three days it would be abandoned and left under foot. After Johanna had stumbled over it half a dozen times, she would use it for kindling-wood, and Will would take no exceptions. Evidently, with Will, all pleasure lay in the *pursuit*; so as soon as the wind-mill was finished, it lost its charm, and Wil. betook himself to "fresh fields and pastures new."

Johnny came home at tea-time, silently happy over the success of his wheel, and all that evening was busy planning how he should make his wheel work to some purpose, as the propeller either of a saw or grist mill. His

head was so full of his schemes that he forgot all about his neglected tool-chest.

That night it rained furiously. The next day was Sunday, and the boys did not go into their favorite play-room—the wood-house chamber. But Monday morning early Johnny went in to make a beginning on his mill, and was dumb with surprise to find his chest and tools all gone!

After a moment, however, he recovered himself, and went down into the kitchen to make inquiries. How he hoped that Johanna or his mother had kindly closed the chest, and put it away in some safe place! To be sure, he didn't know why they should meddle with it at all, but women were frequently given to clearing away boys' traps; so he asked Johanna if she had done anything with it. "Niver a bit," she answered. Then he went to his mother—"Why, no, my dear; you had better ask Will," she said.

Johnny's heart felt heavy enough with a foreboding of evil at the mere mention of Will's name, but he went in pursuit of him

He found him, after considerable search, perched on the top round of a ladder, which was leaning up against a new barn that was being built in the neighborhood, and driving nails with a very professional air. "Halloc you there!" cried Johnny. "What have you done with my tool-chest?"

Will nearly fell off from the ladder, what with the suddenness of Johnny's accusation, and the dreadful truth which flashed through his guilty soul! Johnny's tool-chest was on the top of the barn at home!

Down came the conscience stricken little wretch, and without a word of explanation to Johnny, off he darted towards home as fast as his nimble legs would carry him, while Johnny followed wrathfully behind. He had the ladder up against the barn in a trice, and then a moment after he had the little tool chest in his hands, and stood looking ruefully first at it and then at his terrible brother. It was open, and with the tools all thrown in helter skelter just as he had left them, but it was half full of water, bright red with red chalk

and rust from the tools, and the cover was all warped, and one side of the chest bulged out with the soaking it had received.

"Bring it down here, you rascal!" cried Johnny, fairly choking with grief and anger, for he guessed the whole truth; and Will, who was no coward, if he was a "rascal," brought it slowly down.

Johnny burst into tears, so did Will. But Johnny was in a towering passion, while poor Will was remorseful and self-abased.

"Oh, I am tho thorry I forgot," began Will, in broken tones, but Johnny took his chest and ran in to his mother without deigning to hear a word of explanation.

It was such a pity, such a pity! The nicely polished tools all stained and rusty, the chest spoiled, and Johnny's pleasant temper in such a state of passionate excitement. All because of Will's perverse way of meddling with what did not belong to him, and his miserable carelessness!

The good mother was sad enough about it, but she tried to pour oil upon the troubled

waters, soothed Johnny, and said very little in the way of reproof to Will, who evidently felt sufficiently self-condemned. She tried to have them "make up and be friends," but Johnny was too unhappy to accept any of Will's overtures. The sunshine all faded out of that beautiful June morning.

Johnny finally went away by himself to get over his trouble—that was his way; and then Will came and laid his hot, tearful face down on his mother's shoulder.

"Mother," he said, "how much do you suppose that velocipede is worth that Uncle Harold gave me, last summer?"

"I don't know, my dear; but ten or fifteen dollars, perhaps," she answered.

"And—how—much—was—the—tool-chest worth?" he sobbed.

"About the same, I think."

"Well, please get father to sell my velocipede, and get another tool-chest," he said, entreatingly.

"Yes, Will, I will try and have it done," she promised.

A few weeks later Tommy Wilcox rode Will's darling velocipede, and Johnny, blushing to the roots of his hair with pleased surprise, tintured perhaps with a slight degree of mortification at the remembrance of his passion, was formally presented by Will with a new tool-chest.

Will himself meekly accepted the wrecks of the former one, and whether it was in consequence of the severe lesson he had received, of which the spotted tools kept him constantly in mind, or because he was growing slowly into a better boy, certain it was, he from that time forth took better care of tools.





IV.

HOW JOHNNY AND WILL DID ERRANDS.

FATHERS and mothers work incessantly for their children and they "count it all joy." It is part of God's wise and beautiful plan for the happiness of his creatures. It is a blessed thing for both parents and children, that love lightens the labor of caring for the little ones; but because the burden is borne so cheerfully is no reason why children should not be grateful and anxious to do all they can in return. It is very little they can do—a few steps now and then—an occasional errand, or a little easy work once in a while. This is all. With what cheerful zeal ought they to undertake it, and with what care follow every di-

rection given by those whose hands never weary and whose feet never tire in the service of their darling children !

No boys ever knew their duty in this respect better than Johnny and Will Leonard. No boys could be found who would more readily acknowledge their indebtedness to their dear parents. They were all right in theory, it was only in practice that there was trouble.

Johnny was a slow boy to start always. He hated to leave anything that he was doing and in which he was deeply interested, and it was very hard for him to get his thoughts off from one pursuit and on to another. This may make a great man of Johnny some day, but it is sometimes inconvenient in small boys.

As to Will he started so quickly that he did not half know what he had started for. He was like a gun that would go off "half-cocked," as the boys say—a very unpleasant habit indeed, whether in a gun or boy.

Between the two boys Mrs. Leonard used

to be pretty severely tried. Patience had to have its perfect work. The only consolation she had was that she could see from year to year an improvement in each of their very diversely endowed characters. When they were little fellows of six and eight years old, she tried to teach them the good and necessary lessons of industry and orderliness. She had each one have his own regular daily duties; and she tried to have each hold himself ready at any time to run with pleasure on errands for herself or the family. But the amount of actual help she really got out of the little fellows did not at all compare with the trouble she had in getting it. That is the rule with all boys and girls' work at first, so that even the little they do is for their own benefit and not their friends. It is disciplinary; but looking at it in that light, it is very beneficial to mothers and fathers, so that after all it does amount to something!

These short memories of Johnny's and Will's were the greatest hindrance to their usefulness. Even when they were nine and eleven

years old, they had not got them trained to a very high state of perfection. Let us see how many times in a single week they "forgot," either their regular duties or the little requests which their friends made. We will look at them on a Monday morning very soon after the affair of the tool-chest. One of the things their mother required of them was on washing day to heap up Johanna's wood-box with small wood; and just before it was time for them to go to school, she stepped out into the kitchen to see if they had done their duty. As she feared, the box was empty, and Johanna was coming in with an arm-full of wood, which she deposited with a crash, and then went to the sink to wash off the bits of bark, etc., which clung to her moist bare arms.

"Why, where are the boys?" said Mrs. Leonard. "You should have asked them to bring in the wood."

"Faith, an' I'd much rather get it meself!" answered Johanna. "It's hard enough I have to work widout chasin' and drivin' them boys!"

So Mrs Leonard looked them up and hur-

ried them in to fill the box in three minutes, which was all the time there was before they must go to school. "Dear me!" cried Will, "we forgot everything about that wood," and they rushed in and nearly upset Johanna and themselves by coming in collision with her and a basket of clothes. Into the wood-house they went headlong, and Johnny got a sliver in his finger, and Will stubbed his toe, but the box was filled in three minutes. That shows what a vast amount of work was required of them!

At school their teacher asked them to take their geographies home at night and do a little extra studying, as the close of the term was close at hand, and they were reviewing for examination. Neither one of them thought of it till they commenced to study their lessons the next day, when, do the best they could, their recitation showed the neglect. They were considerably mortified, but they would have forgotten the geographies again if the teacher had not remembered for them, and at the close of school reminded all the class not to forget

the books. Poor young lady! she had duties enough of her own to remember, but she must tax her mind with all that these careless boys and girls ought to have kept in mind for themselves.

Tuesday evening after school, Mrs. Leonard said to Johnny, "I wish you would run down to Mr. Landon's store and bring me a spool of number seventy thread, so that I can finish up these shirts of Harry's before dark."

Away goes Johnny slowly—running was not his natural gait—and back he comes just at dark with a spool of thread as black as the gathering darkness.

"Oh, dear me! what were you thinking of?" cried the mother. "Do you suppose I make shirts with black thread! and what did keep you so?"

Johnny's recollections suddenly seemed to return, "Why, I forgot all about what it was for," he said, "and did you say you was in a hurry?"

Mrs. Leonard looked wearied, "Will my Johnny ever learn to pay attention," she

said "or to hurry when he goes on errands!"

It was too late to make amends for the delay, but Johnny now went back and got the right kind of a spool, and was at home again all in fifteen minutes. It took him nearly an hour before, there was so much to interest him on the street and in the store, and he had failed to remember his mother's words.

"It is going to rain, I think," said Mr. Leonard the same evening, after tea, as he took an umbrella down from the rack in the hall, "and now, boys, see that the buggy is put under cover, and that barrel of shavings brought into the wood-shed."

It was a mistake of his not to specify the boy who was to attend to each affair, for now neither one charged his mind with it, and the next morning Mr. Leonard found the buggy thoroughly soaked, and its cushions in a very sorry plight. It was well that it was not new and valuable, for probably it would have fared just the same. Johanna had happened to remember the shavings, and brought them in

herself; those who kindle the fires are apt to remember, otherwise she would have had a very damp time with her morning fire.

The boys were very sorry and very much ashamed, too much so to say that that they "forgot;" at least Harry was silent, when Mr. Leonard gravely inquired of them whether they intended to take that way to wash their own buggies when they got to be men?

The next great forgetting came on Friday. There was an unusual hurry at the mill just then, because it was almost time for a new crop of wheat to come into the market, and many farmers had just reluctantly come to the conclusion that probably there would be no further rise of prices, and so they had better let the last year's hoarded crop be turned into flour as quickly as possible. Mr. Leonard and his employés were at the mill early and late. Old Adam Brethschneider, who always made his employer's interest his own, was so hurried that he did not take time to shake off or brush off the deposits which were continually gathering upon his venerable form, and used every

evening to look like a pillar of flour, or like Father Time himself; while the children declared their father had been in flour up to his eyebrows, for they could see it there!

The time-honored rule, "first come, first served," was strictly followed by Mr. Leonard, and there were two large lots of wheat at the mill, owned by two different persons, one of which must, of course, be ground first. They were going to begin on it Friday morning, although the men shook their heads a little over such an "unlucky" time for starting.

When Mr. Leonard was coming home to tea on Thursday evening, he met the owner of the wheat, which was to be put in the mill the next morning, and was informed by him that, in consideration of the fact that the other man was extremely anxious to have his flour at the earliest moment, and might lose a certain good offer that he had for it if he was delayed beyond a given time, and, lastly, was willing to pay handsomely for the exchange, he had concluded to waive his claims, and let

his neighbor have the precedence. "Very well," said Mr. Leonard, "I will tell my men of the change, and it will be all right."

Mr. Leonard must have been very absent-minded indeed on that occasion, for instead of going himself to inform Adam of the change, he directed Will to run over and tell him to begin on the "Bristol wheat, and not on the Anderson," in the morning.

"Yes, sir," said Will, promptly. Promptness was one of Will's virtues! Off he scampered, and, in his zeal, forgot just what his father said; but, nothing daunted, rushed into Adam's cottage.

"Hallo, Adam!" he said, with a freedom of speech that he certainly did not learn from his father or mother, "father says you must remember and begin on the Anderson wheat in the morning, and not on the Bristol."

Adam surveyed the bright-eyed, swift-tongued little fellow for a moment in a sort of stolid amazement. Then he relieved his mind by lighting his pipe slowly and giving a dozen leisurely puffs. Then he spoke with

calm dignity—"Say to your father, pray, give himself no more trouble—I have not lost my brains—I understand—I do not forget."

Will thought this a very proper reply, indeed (a little formal, perhaps); but then Adam did get a little lofty sometimes! So he ran home again.

"Did you tell him, Will?" asked the father.

"Yes, sir."

"What did he say?"

"Well," said Will, laughing, "he seemed just a little bit ——" he hesitated for a word an instant—"stuffy, but he said he wouldn't forget, and you needn't worry about it."

Mr. Leonard smiled. "Adam doesn't like changes," he said; "but it is true he doesn't ever forget, and I can always trust him."

But when Will went out from Adam's house, Christine at once said, "What is it ails the pipe? It will not hold out long at that rate!"

So Adam explained, between his whiffs, that Mr. Leonard had vexed him sorely by sending word to him to do just what he, of course

intended to do! "It is as if he said, 'Adam, thou art growing old and silly, let my little son teach you what to do!'" and Adam grew more disturbed by thus exactly stating his ill treatment.

But Christine was womanly-wise, and she said kindly to him that he had been at work very hard lately and was tired. Of course, Mr. Leonard did not mean to insult him. Strange to say her mild persuasions only irritated him more! "Am I, indeed, an old child," he said, "to be coaxed, and told I am tired!" With that he went loftily and gloomily to bed.

Some spirit of bad luck must have been potent on that Friday, for Mr. Leonard only made one hurried visit to his mill in the morning, he was so overcrowded with office work. Everything was moving on briskly, and he said to Adam—"All's right, is it?"

"It is, sir," answered Adam solemnly.

Mr. Leonard bit his lips a little; it was so funny to see the old man so stirred up about such a trifling thing, but he wisely said no more, and went back to his office.

It was not till Monday that he found out what a mistake had been made. Then he was called upon by Mr. Bristol, in a very excited frame of mind. This gentleman had been to the mill to see what progress had been made in his business, and discovered that it was Mr. Anderson's wheat, instead of his own, that was getting the benefit of all the rush and hurry which he found prevailing there.

"Pray, what does this mean, Mr. Leonard?" he said. "Didn't Anderson tell you of our bargain? He's a confounded rascal, or you're a ——."

"Why, what is the matter?" inquired Mr. Leonard, in surprise, and interrupting the torrent of the angry man's words.

"Matter enough!" cried Mr. Bristol. "Here's your mill running like blazes on Anderson's wheat! Do you think I'm going to stand that?"

"No; do sit down!" said Mr. Leonard. "There is some mistake. I'm very sorry indeed. I'll go directly and see where the trouble is."



But Mr. Bristol would not sit down, or do anything but go back to the mill with Mr. Leonard, and hear for himself whatever explanation was offered.

"Adam," said Mr. Leonard, "how is this. Is this the Anderson wheat?"

Adam looked fairly exasperated, and he answered with a good deal of warmth, "Whose wheat should it be? Am I to be treated like an old woman that forgets each hour of the day? Send a little child to tell me what I am to do next, when I know it well, and did never fail; and then come asking me again, 'Is this the Anderson wheat?' It *is* the Anderson wheat, sir!" Adam's voice shook, and his *ths* were all *ds*.

Mr. Leonard looked puzzled—then as if he had solved the mystery. "I am truly sorry, Adam," he said; "the fault all lies, I suspect, in the forgetfulness of my boy Will. But I blame myself, too. I will try and make it right with you Mr. Bristol; and I beg your pardon, Adam, for what seemed like a slight."

Adam looked mollified, but Mr. Bristol was



not so easily managed. It cost Mr. Leonard a good deal of trouble and quite a sum of money to make his two neighbors feel right again. Mr. Bristol insisted that the delay was a heavy loss to him, and Mr. Anderson claimed the amount of money which Mr. Bristol had promised him for giving up the right of precedence!

"I'm a most awful unlucky fellow, father," said Will, humbly, when his father talked with him about all this difficulty. "I'm forever getting into scrapes myself, and making you lots of trouble."

"That is truer than I wish it was," said the father kindly; "but it is a kind of bad luck that is very manageable. Its real name is heedlessness, isn't it? If you had only paid attention enough to what I told you, so that you could have remembered it five minutes, all this trouble might have been avoided."

"I know it," said Will.

Saturday morning Johnny took his turn at blundering. Alice was chief cake-maker now, and took the greatest pride and pleasure in

her accomplishments. On this Saturday she was going to have two or three of her friends in to tea, and so was making a little extra preparation. She was going to make some soda-biscuit, and have them cold, prepared in sandwiches ; then she was going to have an "extra-superfine" loaf of delicate, frosted cake. Her mother offered to come and help, but she was very ambitious to do it all herself. "I want to have the girls see what biscuit I can bake," she said ; "and you know my cake is always good, mother."

"Yes, dear," the mother said, smiling at her eager, confident tone. "I'm very glad you're not such an ignoramus about cooking as I was at your age."

So Alice bustled around and got her materials together, but found the soda-box was almost empty. She would have to send for some, and, as Johnny sat reading in the dining-room, she went in and spoke to him. "I haven't soda enough to go with my cream of tartar, Johnny ; please take the box and run right down street and get it filled."

Johnny had serious objections to leaving his book, and replied to Alice's request with—"Oh, bother, now!"

"You must go, Johnny," said Mrs. Leonard, who was sitting at the sewing-machine in the dining-room.

So Johnny arose reluctantly, and roamed about looking for his cap. He felt in a somewhat critical mood, so he said, "What do you use such things for anyway? Don't all the books and papers say they're poison?"

"Well, when they tell us some better way of making nice things, I'll give up using 'em. Here's your cap—do hurry."

So Johnny started at a moderate gait, while Alice, who was going to make her biscuit first, sat down and took up a book to divert her mind while she waited for the soda, without which nothing could be done. "I know he'll be gone a month," she said impatiently.

Johnny went along leisurely, meditating on the nature of acids and alkalies. "Soda and cream of tartar," he thought, "they get up a great commotion when they're mixed together,

and that makes lots of bubbles, and *baked bubbles* are what women call lightness, I suppose." Then he stopped and leaned up against a tree, and thought what an invention it would be if one could think of some way of keeping soap bubbles! Heat wouldn't be the right thing to go to work with, though.

Then he thought he would go in the drug-store and get a glass of soda-water; he didn't like to spend the necessary five cents, but then it was so warm, and he had thought so much about bubbles, he really wanted to see some. So he went in and got a glass, and then, after lingering a little, went out, and suddenly be-thought himself that perhaps Alice was in a hurry. He quickened his pace somewhat, and then thought, "was it soda or cream of tartar she wanted? I'm sure I've forgot what she did say, only she wanted the two to go together. I guess it was cream of tartar." Then he turned in at the place where they bought these articles always and made his purchase, and in process of time re-appeared at home. He had fully purposed to ask Alice what it

was she sent for, and tell her what he had brought, but she had got so out of patience waiting for him that she greeted him now with such a shower of ironical remarks about his age and infirmities, and his general resemblance to the snail family, that he felt considerably injured; which state of mind, together with the fact that he had picked up a friend on the way, who was waiting for him at the gate to go home with him and see a new microscope, made him rather indifferent to Alice's plans or wishes, so he got leave from his mother to go, and ran out without saying a word that he intended. Alice meanwhile had seized the box and run into the kitchen. With what care she measured and mixed her flour and cream of tartar; how thoroughly she rubbed in the butter! Then she hastily dissolved the supposed soda in the milk, and in a few moments had her nicely cut biscuit in an oven of just the right heat. Then having got the biscuit off her mind, she went hurriedly at the cake-making, knowing that the oven would be too warm for her cake if it was not baked

before Johanna began to get dinner. She condescended to let Johanna rub the butter and sugar together while she beat the eggs; and by the time the biscuit were done, she had the cake ready to put in the oven. The biscuit looked a little peculiar; she could not perceive that they were any thicker than when she cut them out, and instead of being the delicate brown which she desired, they were of a pale sickly sort of hue. She was very much disappointed in them, but she tried to keep up a hope that they would taste better than they looked; and the cake would surely be all right; she had never known that to fail.

Alas for her hopes! That, too, persisted in remaining at a dull unaspiring level! Every time she looked in at it she thought it seemed a little flatter and more lifeless-looking than before. Her heart sank within her. What young cook ever could withstand the depressing influences of heavy cake?

There was no use in avoiding the truth; her whole morning's work was a melancholy failure! She went in to that well-spring of help

and consolation—her mother—with her pan of biscuit in one hand and her half-filled cake-tin in the other, while tears of real mortification and distress stood in her pretty eyes “There, mother,” she said in a disgusted tone, “that’s what comes of bragging! Did you ever see such abominable stuff? I never took more pains with any baking in my life, and now just see how it has behaved; it isn’t fit for the pigs!”

Mrs. Leonard took up one of the biscuit and examined it carefully, broke it in two, smelt of it, and finally tasted of it.

“They certainly are a failure,” she said. “Did you put in the soda?”

“Of course I did,” said Alice, “and measured it carefully.”

“Was your milk sweet?”

“This morning’s milk.”

Mrs. Leonard tasted again. “They are sour and bitter,” she said, “as well as heavy. Something is wrong.”

Then she tasted of the cake. “Why, Alice, dear, I know there is no soda at all in these

things!" and she got up and went into the kitchen to investigate.

"Here is the soda," said Alice, "and here is the cream of tartar."

"This doesn't look like soda," said the mother; there are always lumps in soda, don't you remember?" Then she tasted of the suspicious article, and the whole mystery was explained. Johnny had brought home the wrong thing again!

When he came home at dinner-time, he was duly questioned and reprimanded, and sent in hot haste for the right article.

Alice had, notwithstanding these unnecessary drawbacks, some nice specimens of her cooking on the tea-table, although she had to change her programme somewhat.

But oh, Johnny! Johnny! because your friends by great efforts can make up for your mistakes to the outward seeming, do you think that anything can compensate for the annoyance and waste of time that you occasion them? Tell me, is there any way of making up a lost hour? And, most important ques-

tions of all, is there any way of erasing unpleasant memories, or of taking out the stains which are left forever stamped on a character even by these little deeds of carelessness. Even repentance will not do this, nor forgiveness, though it be "sought carefully and with tears."





V.

DUMB SUFFERERS.

THEY were very tender-hearted children these young Leonards. Johnny was occasionally accused by his brothers and sisters of being somewhat hard-hearted, but it was a charge without a foundation. He kept his feelings to himself a little more than the rest, and he didn't have very violent emotions without some reason. There lay the difference.

Alice was just a trifle too sensitive, either to her own sorrows or those of others. A careless word often drove her away to her own room for a good cry, and she turned very pale over a cut finger. But this acute organization was mingled with such tender consideration

for others that she was full of unselfish sympathy. Her heart was "at leisure from itself" sufficiently to let the tears spring up into her eyes at the thought of a little child's almost causeless grief, and she couldn't bear to have anything suffer. It was a little ridiculous to see her carry a spider or an ant out doors rather than kill it with her broom! And her tender treatment of mosquitoes, no humane society would have thought of demanding!

The boys by no means rivalled her in these respects. They wanted the beggars fed, and the poor children in their neighborhood comfortably clothed, and they could all cry over any body's ill-treatment, or any animal's, whether real or fancied. But when it came to mosquitoes and such pests they showed no mercy.

Alice was a vegetarian in theory, but she had too healthy an appetite to put her theory in practice and reject a nice beef-steak or mutton-chop. She always had a hearty cry, however, when Juno's calf was carried ruthlessly away in the spring, and lifted up her voice in

protest against the horrible cruelty. So did all the children, and the mother, too, for that matter!

But notwithstanding all this soft-heartedness, many a poor dumb creature came to grief on account of these children, and all because they "forgot."

Alice loved her canary bird, Diamond, better than any jewel she possessed or that she could have owned. She talked to him in the most friendly and loving, not to say confidential, manner; and Diamond seemed to appreciate her conversation and find it very inspiring. She composed a poem about him, and certainly he sang songs in return—songs that seemed to gush from his heart "like rain from the clouds of summer." As a general thing he had superabundant care—the daintiest food, the freshest of water, and all the desirables of bird-life, except freedom and society, yet even Diamond would have been sacrificed long ago if Mrs. Leonard had not been more thoughtful of him than was his little mistress.

Alice used to hang his cage in her own room

in summer, but in winter had to keep him in the parlor for warmth, and because she could not sit in her own room nearly so much as in summer. Every night he was hung up on a certain high hook, to keep him out of the way of pussy; and then in the morning she moved the cage lower down to avoid the heat of the upper part of the room. Her mother had told her she must feel the entire responsibility of looking after the little creature, as she had too many cares herself to add to them in the least. So Alice did not intentionally leave anything undone that was connected with her pet, and then rid herself of a feeling that she had neglected him by thinking, "Oh, well, mother'll see to him!" As a general thing she was faithful to her trust, but once in a while, when some delightful book, or some gaily chatting young visitor took off her attention, away she would run to school and leave Diamond to whistle for his breakfast, or slowly suffocate in the heat of the upper air. Two or three times Mrs. Leonard found him half dead, and rescued him from his unfortunate perch just in time to

save his life; and quite often she gave him food or water when she discovered that Alice had forgotten to do so. Then Alice would come hurrying in breathlessly from school, with a look of the greatest concern on her face, and cry out, "Oh, mother! mother! have you taken care of Diamond? I forgot all about him this morning, and I haven't been able to study or do anything but fret about him ever since I happened to remember him just after school begun!" And she would be so penitent and make such an ado over the bird, that there would be nothing left for her mother to say except that a very little more such forgetfulness would send poor Diamond to where no protestations of love, however ardent, would reach or revive him. This would dissolve Alice's gentle soul in tears, and Diamond would have extra supplies for many a day.

Poor old Prince, that most faithful of domestic servants, was a frequent sufferer, through Harry's forgetfulness, when he was first put in the care of that very irresponsible young

man. He had an excellent appetite, and although he did not take tea to keep up his failing energies, he did take water in large quantities, and had fixed and regular habits about eating and drinking. Think of the poor old fellow's state of mind and body when Harry forgot him for all day long! He could not utter his complaints very intelligibly, but Harry thought he sometimes looked unutterable things, while his ears were even more expressive.

Mr. Leonard was so well acquainted with his eldest son, and so thoughtful of poor old Prince's comfort, that he did not fail for a long time after he had consigned the horse to Harry's care to inquire every noon before dinner, "Have you taken care of the horse, Harry?" Then if Harry changed color and exclaimed, "I declare I forgot," his father would say, "What carelessness! Just leave your dinner and go directly to the barn. Never leave a poor beast to suffer while you enjoy the luxuries of life!" It sharpened Harry's memory wonderfully, for he did not fancy deferred din-

ners any more than any other boy. After a while the regular daily meals of the horse and cow were among the things that Harry never forgot, so wholesome is the effect of penalties.

Johnny and Will petitioned their father, about the time they were first introduced to my readers, to let them keep some hens. They were both of them enterprising fellows, and it struck them that hens might be a profitable investment. There would be eggs, and there would be chickens, both very salable articles, and they were eager to undertake the speculation. They brought forward a great many arguments in favor of their scheme. Their yard was large; there was plenty of room for a nice hen-house and yard right back of the barn, and the profits of the business would soon pay for all the outlay. They would keep them shut up so carefully, and feed them just as "The Agriculturist" said. They would do it all themselves, and nobody need be troubled about them or by them in the least, and it would be so nice to have fresh eggs all the time, and a plenty of chickens in the fall!

"Darling little chickens!" interrupted Alice. 'They're the cunningest things in the world! Do let us have them, father.'

"Yes, please let us have them!" chimed in the boys, and that was their closing argument.

Mr. Leonard hesitated. His judgment told him that of course the whole thing would be a nuisance first and then a failure. He knew just what pests a flock of hens and chickens were in a neighborhood, and what bitter feuds, alas! had often grown up between neighbors, based upon the scratching propensities of a single motherly old hen! He knew just what a pair of boys they were who stood before him. But knowing all these things, he still gave his consent. The fact cannot be accounted for on philosophical principles, but perhaps some other fathers have been known to act just as illogically when two such bright, eager, irresistible, little special pleaders stood before them!

The boys went zealously to work the next morning. Even Harry was pressed into the service; and there was a great gathering to-



gether of materials to construct the new building. It was decided to employ a carpenter, and Harry, as book-keeper of the concern, made the following entries:

To boards and pickets . . .	\$4 75
To carpenter	2 25

Then a few days later he entered—

To six hens	\$2 40
To General Grant	50
To four dozen eggs	80

It may be well to explain that the General Grant item does not refer to the illustrious head of the armies of the United States, but to the valiant and chivalrous chief of this feathered community.

The fowls were bought of a farmer who lived near Clear Rapids, and the boys took old Prince and drove over after them one pleasant morning in their spring vacation. They found Mr. Robbins, the farmer, ploughing in one of his broad level fields, and went eagerly up to him to ask about the hens. So Mr. Robbins

stopped his horses, good naturedly, and sat down on the beam of the plough to rest a little and quiz the boys. "Leonard's boys be you?" he said, "and goin' into the chicken trade? that's a mighty oncertain trade, let me tell you! 'specially if you carry it on in a town! Why, what on airth can you expect of such rovin' critters as hens, if you go an' box 'em up in a little coop six foot square?"

Will made haste to explain that their hen-house was a great deal bigger than that; and they were going to have a nice little yard for them to run in, with high pickets a.l around it.

"And just at night," Johnny said, with the air of an experienced poultry-raiser, "we're going to let them out, so they can get some grass and gravel and so on."

"Oh, you be, be you?" laughed Mr. Robbins; "and what times you fellers will have driving 'em out of your garden! Got some neighbors pretty nigh you, I s'pose?"

"Oh, yes, sir!" said Will, "lots of 'em."

Again Mr. Robbins laughed a knowing little laugh, and then he got up and took hold of

the plough-handles, with the lines hanging loosely around his neck.

"We've come after the hens, if you please," suggested Johnny.

"Why, good land!" said Mr. Robbins, "you didn't expect to catch 'em in the day time, did you? Might as well run after quails! They're scattered all over that wheat stubble out yonder. You just go in the house and tell my woman to give you a drink of our root-beer; she can beat the world on root-beer, and then you go home and come again to-morrow. I'll have my Bill catch your hens for you to-night after they go to roost. Say boys," he added, by way of a little parting fun, "which would you rather have, old hens or young ones?"

The boys thought probably young ones would be the best, "they'd last longer," Johnny thought.

"Well, you don't know how to tell old ones from young ones, I reckon?"

The boys confessed their ignorance.

"Well, bile 'em!" said Mr. Robbins, and he started up his horses with the air of a

man who had given some valuable information.

The next day saw the hens and the Major-General snugly established in their new home, and scratching around in a way that showed they intended to make the best of it, although they did occasionally look through their prison bars with an air that seemed to say, why are we thus "cabined, cribbed, confined?"

The boys looked up all the authorities they could find on the subject of poultry, and became very book-wise on the treatment of fowls, while Mr. Leonard taxed his mind to recall all his youthful experience in regard to hens and chickens, and enlightened the boys with the results. They certainly did not need to err through ignorance, and their father was very indulgent in the way of boards and nails. They put up boxes for nests in the most approved way, and they fed and watered their new pets with the most faithful attention—for a while! Johanna was besieged for scraps of meat and all other remnants from the table, while oats and corn were liberally furnished from the

barn They planted several long rows of lettuce near the hen-house, so that when they let them out for a few moments late in the afternoon, they would be able to find very tempting refreshments close at home, and so would not care to stray away.

Two of the hens were already clucking, and growing more—well, if they had been human beings we would have to say nervously sensitive, but since they were nothing but hens, we'll call it savagely cross, every day. So these anxious-minded old females were furnished with a dozen or fourteen eggs apiece—Johanna assured the boys that those were the lucky numbers—and the setting began. Soon another hen was similarly affected, and then another, so that there were four broods in process of growth. The other two hens belonged to some new-fangled race who did not believe in confining themselves with troublesome families, and never did such an old-fashioned thing as to cluck! But they did condescend to lay eggs, and the boys began to bring in eggs with the satisfied appearance of suc-

cessful speculators! Everything went on prosperously. Mrs. Leonard bought the eggs, and, like honest boys as they were, the proceeds went towards paying the debt they had incurred.

Great was the excitement in the house when the first little chickens were discovered to be peeping under the old hen's motherly wings. Alice and Harry were almost as joyful over it as Johnny and Will, and Mrs. Leonard herself admired the downy little new-comers to the entire satisfaction of the children. Even Mr. Leonard was coaxed out to make several brief visits to the hen-house and pay his tribute to this crowning bit of success. The boys really flattered themselves that they had been largely instrumental in bringing about this event, and were duly elated. However, by the time that the fourth brood were on the carpet, or rather on the grass, the newness began to wear off a little from the enterprise, and the ardor of the boys flagged perceptibly.

Each of the four broods had a little house of its own, with a very gothic roof, and slats

nailed across the front in the usual manner, and the four little homes stood outside of the larger inclosure. It was quite an amount of work to feed all these little peepers, and also take care of the rest of the flock, and sometimes it began to grow a trifle wearisome. Now, too, the grass and gravel had all disappeared from the yard where the hens were confined, and in order to have them continue to thrive and lay, they must be let out for half an hour before sundown, and then watched to see that they did no mischief in their own or their neighbors' gardens, and finally, after they went back into their quarters for the night, the door must be closed so that by no means they could get out again two hours before any body was up in the morning and commit all sorts of depredations. All this care, now that the novelty was gone, weighed pretty heavily on our two boys, and they began to shirk somewhat, and leave it for each other, or to forget it altogether.

All the family, however, took such an interest in the hennery that for a time nothing serious

happened. Johanna would take out a dish of crumbs from the kitchen and find that they had no water, so she would just say, "Och! thim lazy boys!" and run in and get a dipper of water to replenish their tins. Or Harry would think he would look around and see how they were getting on, and take along a measure of grain, just for the pleasure of feeding them, and be surprised to find them very hungry. As to being let out at night, that did not show so plainly if it was neglected, but they must have had many an ungratified longing for the good things they could see through their prison grates, and if hens do have memories, how they must have looked back to the unlimited freedom and good fare which they used to enjoy at farmer Robbins'!

Once in a while, when the boys had a time of reckoning, and realized how profitable their investment promised to be if they could only rear and fatten these forty and more little chickens, and keep the laying hens in the proper spirit, their zeal would get a fresh impetus, and for two or three days nothing could

surpass their faithfulness. Then something would be left undone again and trouble would follow.

It was the mother, as usual, who first discovered that the boys' interest was waning; but when she talked with Will about it, she generally found that it was Johnny who was to blame; and, strange to say, when she took Johnny to dues, he was entirely innocent, while Will was the guilty party! So she wisely decided that they should take turns about the business, one having all the care one week and the other the next, while she would, in addition to all her other cares, try and remember the arrangement, and look closely after both the boys and the biddies.

Johnny did very well his week, which was the first one after the decision. He had some pretty severe trials, and several times was heard to express an opinion of hens which was not at all flattering. They had such a perverse way of racing right by that nice growth of lettuce, which they were extremely partial to when it did not grow so near home! and,

rushing into the garden, would fall to scratching in the most undesirable places—like Alice's vervena bed! On they would march straight for Harry's rows of "Tom Thumb peas," and shell and eat them with a skill and appreciation that showed green peas were as much to their taste as they are to ours! It was all Johnny could do for the hour they were out to keep them within bounds.

That week, too, for the first time, fatal disease began to prey upon the youngest brood. Before this one or two had been drowned, and there had been one or two deaths from unknown causes, also a few mysterious disappearances, which were attributed to neighboring cats—*our own* cats never do such things—never! But the coops still overflowed with their little tenants when this pestilence appeared. They took to gaping early and late—when they had reason to be tired, and when they had none—still they yawned. They were as badly off apparently as young ladies of the most fashionable and aristocratic type! And the end of it was, they gaped themselves

to death! This at least was the fate of many ; but if a case was taken in the very beginning, and vigorous remedies used, sometimes the poor little patients recovered. It began to be very lively work indeed to take care of these hens and chickens!

Then Will's week came, and a sorry week it was to Will. The weather was very warm now, and the hens suffered very much if they were not abundantly supplied with water. More than once Johanna reported to Mrs. Leonard that the "poor bastes were croakin' and pantin' themselves to death, and just starvin' intirely for want of a sup to drink."

Will, being brought before the tribunal for neglect, would confess to perhaps a single case of forgetfulness, but declare that it had only been a very short time since there was plenty of water in every coop. It seemed to him that he had no time at all for playing. It was just feed and water and watch those "plaguy old hens" every minute when he wasn't in school! If by any good fortune he did get through, there would be a new case of "the

gapes," and the little sufferer would have to be doctored with pepper-corns or something else. Will had never known such a burden of care and responsibility, and his young shoulders ached in consequence. Fortunately for him, Uncle Harold was visiting them then, and he had a charming way of going around with the boys and making the dull daily routine fairly sparkle with fun and excitement. So Will managed to survive that week and several similar ones, as also did Johnny.

But by and by August came, and the weather was hotter and more oppressive than ever. Uncle Harold was gone, so there was nobody to turn the work into play. Besides, half-grown chickens are not nearly so interesting and beautiful as little newly-hatched broods. The poultry business was a bore and no mistake!

Of the forty original chickens, only twenty-three were left, so great had been the ravages of the pestilence, and these survivors, if they were capable of any of the feelings of humanity, must have often wished they could have

shared the fate of their young brothers and sisters who had perished before they had experienced the miseries of being shut up, starved and choked with thirst! They were all kept now in the large inclosure, and so made quite a crowded and lively community. Not a green thing grew in this yard, and the earth had been scratched over and over till not a solitary bug or ant had its abode there. If a fly or insect of any sort showed itself within those pickets, there was such a clamorous pursuit of it that it generally had a chance to escape, from the very fact that there were so many pursuers. It was doubly necessary, therefore, that these poor little prisoners should be daily allowed the small privilege of a half-hour's freedom to run about and pick up such supplies as their nature's craved.

Gardens were now in the very height of their productiveness. Sweet corn was in its perfection; golden, summer squashes lay amid the great green leaves like nicely scalloped pats of butter; cucumbers and melons looked cool and inviting, and tomatoes hung on the

vines in gorgeous red and yellow clusters. Everything seemed to tempt the appetites of both feathered and unfeathered bipeds.

All day long the pent-up fowls kept up a sort of melancholy peeping and croaking, and at evening, if the boys opened their prison-door, they rushed out pell mell, jumping, flying, running, in a perfect tumult of eagerness. Now that there were thirty of them, it took both of the boys to keep them within the limits of their own grounds. The arrangement was to have them stay on the grass plot in the back yard and about the barn, but it was by no means easy to carry out this plan. Is forbidden fruit delightful to every living creature? It would seem so, from their behavior. Such longings as these chickens had for a good peck at the melons, tomatoes and lettuce that grew in the garden, while their own lettuce, and the melon-rinds and half-decayed tomatoes and cucumbers which were daily thrown to them, were often left untouched! And in what other way can be explained the ungovernable preference which

these fowls showed for Mr. Noble's garden? Every night that the boys remembered to let their hens out, they would have to stand with long switches in their hands and keep guard over their wayward flock, or else within five minutes Robby Noble would be throwing stones at some straggler that was pecking at his pop-corn.

But, ah! how often those negligent boys would be away just at sundown, with not a thought of the poor, suffering fowls in their careless brains; and the little creatures, after running around and around their yard, vainly thrusting their heads through the openings a thousand times, would go into their little house and fly up on to the roosts, abandoning all hopes of better things for that night, and croaking out their melancholy complaints to each other!

There was only one way of avenging their wrongs—this was to stop laying; and this they did? Who could blame them?

There were a good many to keep watch of the boys' treatment of their live stock—their

mother and Johanna, Harry and Alice—and among them all, they were very faithfully reminded of their duties and reprimanded for their failures.

It would be almost sundown, perhaps, and Johanna would hail one or both of the boys in passing through the house, with—“Now, are ye goin’ to trate them poor bastes of yourn the same way to-night that ye did last night? I’ve heard ’em screechin’ and talkin’ about ye all day, an’ I wouldn’t have sich things said o’ me for my weight in gould!”

Whereupon the “bastes” would be let out of duress once more. But it was such a task to watch them when they were out that the boys dreaded it very much, and it began to be among the things that were frequently “forgotten.” Then Mrs. Leonard received a polite little note from Mrs. Noble informing her that their garden was being very seriously injured by her sons’ hens, and begging that she would attend to the matter. Mrs. Leonard was very much ashamed of her boys’ neglect, and lectured them well on the subject.

So then they "forgot" to let the poor creatures out for two or three days, until Alice raised such a disturbance about their sufferings that Mr. Leonard began to notice the trouble, and told the boys not to fail in this respect again, or he should charge them twenty-five cents for every omission, and take his pay in chickens. It helped their memories a good deal. But now the effect of Mrs. Noble's note wore off, and they grew careless again about watching their emancipated flock, and one evening both went away and left the hens at large. It was so near sundown they didn't believe they could go far or do much harm, and there was an attractive game of ball going on near by, which tended to increase their faith in the chickens' good behavior. Away they went, and, when they came home, they forgot to go out and shut the hennery door. Meanwhile, while they were having their "innings," and counting their "tallies," their wayward poultry had, by some evil instinct, gone at the top of their speed down across some back lots into the Widow

Mulrooney's garden ! Here they found some delicious young cabbages, whose tender leaves proved extremely palatable. While they were enjoying the feast, however, out came the widow herself in a great rage, and with broom and mop, sticks and stones, put them speedily to flight. But picture the state of her mind the next morning, when she went out at six o'clock to milk her cow, and discovered that whole flock of thirty voracious fowls, with "General Grant" triumphantly leading them on, reveling among her beloved cabbages again ! Her wide cap border fairly stood erect, and, seizing the first missile she could find, which chanced to be a brick-bat, she hurled it at the unfortunate chief, who straightway bit the dust. She then turned her batteries upon the privates, who retreated in the wildest confusion. Not satisfied with her victory, however, Mrs. Mulrooney determined to make thorough work, and, clutching the body of the General in her hand, she followed the flying, cackling, utterly demoralized foe. She pursued them, brandishing her lifeless

victim in one hand, and occasionally throwing a stone with the other, till she reached their place of abode, and made a sudden entrance into Mr. Leonard's kitchen just as Johanna was kindling the morning fire. In true Celtic fashion, Mrs. Mulrooney did not stop to consider whether she had now found the proper object to vent her wrath upon or not, but, without a note of warning, she hurled the yet warm body of the rooster at Johanna's innocent head !

Then followed a scene, which baffles description. Johanna was ready enough to blame the boys herself, and if the widow had come and courteously stated her grievance, she would have found a willing champion in Johanna ; but to burst in upon her with this outrageous insult was quite another way of proceeding and met with a fitting reception. She had a shovel in her hand at the moment of the attack, and would have thrown it at Mrs. Mulrooney, if her first thought had not been that the woman was raving crazy. In a moment, however, she understood the case, for

the widow poured forth such a torrent of angry ejaculations as explained the matter; but Johanna was too much incensed to take sides with her enraged countrywoman, and answered her in language more forcible than elegant. "For shame," she cried, "to make a mad woman of yerself about a handful of cabbages, and go an' kill the young gentlemen's rooster! Misther Leonard 'll have the law on ye for it."

But Mr. Leonard heard the tumult, and now appeared to speak for himself. He assured Mrs. Mulrooney that he would pay her for and the damage the chickens had done, and that it was entirely due to the carelessness and forgetfulness of his boys, and he inquired calmly if she had not been a little hasty about killing poor chanticleer, whose dead body lay on the floor where it had first been thrown. The widow did not choose to acknowledge that she had acted rashly, but she was sufficiently pacified to set a price upon her cabbages, which was promptly paid to her, and she went home to her milking.

That was a sorrowful morning with Johnny and Will. "General Grant's" sad fate grieved them dreadfully—so much so that their father and mother did not add to their trouble by a word of reproach. It was a bitter lesson, and the boys lamented their favorite and berated Mrs. Mulrooney in unmeasured terms.

They buried poor General Grant under a little evergreen tree, and Alice wrote an elegy expressive of his virtues and bewailing his fate.

One would have supposed this lesson would last, but it was harder work than ever for the boys to remember their nightly duties, so much of the beauty and attractiveness of their flock was now gone. Not a fortnight after the loss of the head of the clan, they made another escapade while the boys were playing marbles in Mrs. Noble's back-yard.

"Say, boys," said Robby Noble, suddenly, as it began to grow dark, "where's them chickens of yourn?"

"Oh, they're scratching round our barn," said Johnny; "they stay at home a good deal more peaceably than they used to in General

Grant's days," but scarcely were the words out of his mouth when there was an excited, "Shew! shew!" from the house across the road, and half-a-dozen of the chickens, who had been trespassing in that direction, came flying home. But there was no complaint made, and the boys "risked" them more and more, day after day, just letting them out and throwing a little grain around, and then leaving them till they went back into their house to roost. When the boys' own bed-time arrived, they made a point of remembering to go out and shut the hennery door, but one night even this was forgotten, and the whole flock of hens and chickens were at large for the next day. The boys made a feeble and fruitless attempt to get them home, but abandoned it soon. Mrs. Leonard was very much troubled, and nervously apprehensive of another attack from the widow Mulrooney. But the day passed quietly. When the flock came home at night, there was one holding a broken leg up off from the ground by a painful effort and hopping along in the most pitiful way, while another



was so bruised that it died in the course of a day or two. The disagreeable neighbors across the road had evidently been stoning them, as one of the little girls who lived there told Johnny the next day, adding, by way of further information, "And my ma says if they come in our yard again she'll fix 'em; we've got some rat-p'ison."

Surely now our boys will take care of the remnant of their flock! Alas! it was not a week afterward before a "grand travelling entertainment" of some sort made its "gorgeous triumphal entrance" into Clear Rapids, passing by Mr. Leonard's house just as the boys opened the hennery door and let their feathered prisoners rush out. "The golden chariot, drawn by four white horses," containing the "magnificent orchestra," was too attractive a spectacle for our boys to resist; they could not "turn away their eyes from beholding this vanity," and down the street they ran. The doomed chickens meanwhile ran across the road, where presently there was some very attractive food thrown to them. Some people

seem to think any kind of inhumanity to trespassing creatures is entirely justifiable, and these people were of that mind. Half an hour afterward Johnny and Will came back home, and driving in a few stragglers, shut their flock up for the night.

In the morning what a pitiful sight was that which met Will's eyes when he went out to give his chickens their breakfast! Eight or ten poor little victims lay dead in different parts of the hen-house and yard; two or three still sat on their perch with closed eyes and ruffled feathers, evidently in great distress; while others staggered feebly about the yard vainly trying to overcome the dreadful effects of strychnine! Of all the beautiful brood only three or four were left unharmed. There, among the stiff and cold, lay little "Top-knot," Rosa's pretty pet; and here, among the sick, was "Nick," the gamy little fellow, who had just begun to practice on crowing with such funny results. He would never crow again. Will sat down and covered his face with his hands. He had no heart to go in and tell the

tale. It all flashed over him, just what was the matter, and who had done this dreadful deed—and why. At first he was too much shocked and distressed to be angry, and then he grew very wrathful, shaking his brown little fist and setting his white teeth together with a look that savored of vengeance. Then he began to cry, and when Will felt badly enough to cry, he always went to his mother. What a blessed comforter she was always, even when she showed him that his trouble was wholly due to his own mistakes and shortcomings!

He said not a word to any one as he ran through the kitchen and dining-room, straight up-stairs to her room, which she was regulating; it was just after breakfast. The door stood open and he ran in, all his distress showing itself in his flushed face and quivering lips. "Oh, mother!" he cried, "all our dear little chickens are dead—every one is killed! It's that horrid old savage, Mrs. Stone, that's done it; and I wish she was poisoned, too, I do! I'll get some arsenic—I'll—"

"Oh, stop! stop! my dear boy," said Mrs. Leonard, sitting down in a low chair, while he dropped down beside her and hid his face in her lap. "It is shockingly cruel if Mrs. Stone has poisoned your chickens, but we mustn't let ourselves be wicked because she is. There is a fault, too, back of Mrs. Stone's unkindness, isn't there?"

Poor Will confessed that there was. "Of course, we ought to have watched 'em every minute, mother," he said; "but just because we forgot once or twice, and they run into her garden for a few minutes, she needn't go and kill 'em all without once saying a word to us about what she was going to do!" And Will broke down again in a flood of tears.

"Perhaps she didn't do it," said the mother. 'Let us wait a little before we condemn her. And, my darling boy, is 'forgot' the right word to use when you tell how you neglected to watch your chickens?"

Then the two went down-stairs together, and soon all the family knew about the disaster. They all went out to the hennery ex-

cept Mr Leonard, who had already gone down town. It was too true, all that Will had said. Alice turned away from the dreadful scene crying as if her heart would break, while little Rosa was loud in her lamentations over poor "Top-knot." Harry stamped about, and proposed sending for a detective policeman and a constable ! while poor Johnny, after the first look, turned very white, and then went quietly away up-stairs. He always wanted to be alone when he was in the most trouble.

Mrs. Leonard thought best for Harry to kill immediately even the two or three who seemed unharmed, fearing that they might yet develop the effects of poison, and so be prolonged sufferers. This was the tragical end of the chicken speculation.

Subsequent disclosures proved that Mrs Stone did poison this flock of innocent chickens, but neither Mr. nor Mrs. Leonard ever thought best to appear to know it. "She had some provocation," Mr. Leonard said, "and let us be charitable. There is a great difference in people's moral perceptions."

It took Johanna to do the subject justice, so the boys thought. "The murtherous, stony-hearted ould woman!" she cried, "to burn up the insides of a flock of poor little birds, just because they was peckin' the seeds from a few ould tomatoes—an' the loiks of her to be thinkin' herself a foine leddy! Even the Widow Mulrooney kilt the cock wid a stone, an' brought him home herself!"

As to our poor little boys, they were certainly very much humiliated when they thought how their enterprise had turned out; but, like many another bitter fruit that grows in the Valley of Humiliation, it was exceedingly wholesome! Their father could check them in any wild project by telling them to look over that poultry account; and, indeed, it was a very useful and convenient illustration for all their friends to use in regard to a great many subjects.





VI.

POOR JUNO.

SHE was a beautiful white cow, and, of all the family favorites, held the chief place. They had owned her so long, and she was so gentle and mild-eyed, and, withal, so useful and valuable, that they had the best of reasons for loving the good creature. She had been a member of the household for ten years at the time when she first appeared before the readers of these pages. Alice and Harry were four years old when their father proposed to sell the little white month-old calf to the butcher, but they raised such an affecting appeal in its behalf, and it was such a pretty and promising little animal, that at length it

was decided to keep it, and it was a decision of which they never repented.

Mrs. Leonard gave her the name of Juno, and henceforth she became a household pet, receiving such an extra amount of care and feeding that she was always sleek and fat, with clean silky hair, and quiet, familiar ways. Her great, liquid brown eyes seemed almost human in their expression of gentle confidence. When she was no longer a "little bossy," but a full grown motherly cow, the children still fondled her, and carried her dainties in the way of crusts, of corn, or wheat-bread, and many a nice dish of apple parings, which she very much appreciated. She was so gentle that little Rosa would perch herself fearlessly on her broad back, if she could only coax her up near enough to the fence to make her back attainable.

Johanna was the milk-maid; and if she was not as beautiful and picturesque in her costume as the fair milk-maids we read of in poetry and romance, she certainly was a great favorite with Juno, who always greeted her

with a low, murmurous sound of expectant pleasure, for Johanna always went out to milk provided with some nice preparation of bran or of "middlings," or some toothsome mash of cooked vegetables, made according to "ould counthry" rules, and which always kept the cow "in good heart." Certainly her heart warmed towards Johanna. As to her milk—that staple of food and chiefest of luxuries in every family where there are children or people with unsophisticated and correct tastes—it was unsurpassed in excellence. Creamy-yellow, like her own soft skin; sweet and fragrant as morning air in June; delicious and wholesome and abundant—such was Juno's milk! No wonder they all loved and prized her, and treated her with the tenderest consideration. True, she might sometimes have gone hungry after her care was given to Harry, if Johanna had not been so mindful of her; but even Harry very seldom forgot her, and if any cow in the world had reason to feel that her lot was cast in a happy place, it was this same favored Juno. As she placidly

chewed her cud, she always looked as if this was her settled conviction, and, no doubt, she looked her honest sentiments. The only sorrow she ever experienced was the yearly loss of her calf, in which necessary trouble she had, as I have said before, the most cordial sympathy from all the household, with such consolations as befitted her nature!

In summer she was pastured in a large field near the village, and her daily driving to and from the pasture was one of the boys' daily duties, first of Harry's, and then in later times of Johnny's and Will's. It was less than half-a-mile out of the village, and the road leading to it was shady and pleasant. The field itself was also a pleasant spot, with a grove of oak and hickory trees in one corner, and others scattered here and there over the field. A pretty little tributary to the river made a meadow of another part, through which it crept softly. So the boys hardly ever felt that it was anything but a pleasure to drive the cow to pasture; both the grove and the brook were so attractive. Boys are amphib-

ous little animals, all of them. Was there ever one who did not love to wade in water, or fish for "minnies" with a crooked pin, or an old straw hat? Johnny Leonard would lie contentedly for hours on the banks of the brook and watch the "skaters," as they called the curious little insects that went gliding over the surface of the still pools.

Besides, the boys could often earn an honest penny by driving other people's cows with their own; some people own cows but not boys. Pocket-money they all enjoyed, especially if it was their own earning. Their father was quite as liberal with them as was for their own good, but he liked to know what they did with money, and sometimes, as Will said, "a feller *wants* something awfully that he doesn't *need* one bit."

The boys earned fifty cents a week by driving two cows along with Juno, while the minister's cow they took care of without pay, as their tribute towards his salary. Everybody in Clear Rapids did not do as much.

This fact, that they were hired and paid,

made them feel their responsibility much more sensibly than usual, so that they never failed to start directly after prayers, every summer morning. They took turns about it both of the summers during which my readers have known them, though generally they both went, "just for the fun of it."

These boys could evidently remember the duties for which they were accountable to tribunals besides the home one, and be very faithful and punctual in discharging them.

"Those are splendid boys of yours," said one of the owners of these cows to Mr. Leonard, "I never saw little chaps with more business in them."

"I am glad you have so good an opinion of them," answered Mr. Leonard, bowing and smiling, and his heart was by no means unmoved by the compliment, but at the same time he thought perhaps his neighbor wouldn't have so exalted an opinion of the youngsters if he had the management of them, and especially if he knew about the very undeveloped state of their business faculties. But he

remembered that "boys will be boys," and was glad if there were any hopeful signs about his own.

The pasture was surrounded by a high rail fence, with bars to let down when the cows were driven in and out, and the boys had been told always to let the bars down entirely, and not to make the cows hurry in jumping over them, also to drive them slowly home; and as a general thing, they followed these directions, but sometimes they "forgot," especially if they were in a hurry, and poor Juno with the rest would try to jump quickly over; but as cows are not in the least like grasshoppers, they would all come to grief in one way or another, scraping their poor old shins, or perhaps, stumbling down and spraining, bruising, and jarring their heavy bodies. Gymnastics may be very fine things for boys, but they are decidedly injurious to cows, as Johnny and Will very well knew; poor Juno in particular, who was growing old and stiff in the joints, suffered not a little from such thoughtlessness.

The fall after she was ten years old, Mr Leonard said one day to the family, "I fear we shall have to let poor old Juno go to the slaughter. It seems cruel, but it has to be the fate of cows, and is perhaps, more merciful than it seems."

He could scarcely finish his remark, there was such a tumult of interruption.

"Oh, John!" said Mrs. Leonard, in half reproachful tones.

"What, kill Juno!" said Alice, slowly, and then she began to cry.

"No! No! No!" cried Rosa.

Harry and Johnny looked amazed and indignant, while Will cried out impetuously, "I'd rather be butchered myself!"

"Well, well," said the father, "I see you all intend to have her die a lingering painful death of old age. I'm the only tender-hearted one among you. But we'll let her live another year at any rate, if you all insist upon it."

So Juno was spared, and they all felt they must do more than ever to make happy

this last year of her life. The boys were really very careful of her comfort all winter, and the next spring drove her to and from the pasture at a moderate pace. They were trying to make her last days her best days, and it did seem as if they had never loved the poor creature so well. Yet she came to her death through Will's means. This is the way it happened. Harry had a gun, as has been before mentioned, a weapon that was a continual terror and trouble to his mother, but about which she did not say a great deal, because she supposed that after a boy got to be thirteen or fourteen years old, a gun was one of the essentials of life. But there was one point upon which she was very decided. The gun must never be brought into the house loaded, and it never must be left loaded about the premises, lest some one should take it up carelessly, and perhaps do infinite harm. Also the younger boys were not to touch it. Will in particular was charged to keep his hands off from it. Mr. Leonard had smiled a little at her positiveness, a gun in the hands

of a careful boy like Harry, did not seem to him particularly alarming. Fire-arms do not affect masculine nerves as they do feminine ones.

Harry meant to be obedient in this respect as in all others to his mother, but not the least trouble had ever come to him in connection with his gun, and now he was fifteen years old. Even his mother had ceased to say every time she saw it in his hands, "Pray be careful, my boy." So one day he came in from hunting, and, forgetting all about his mother's injunction, set his still loaded gun down by the side of the barn, while he stepped into the house to give Alice a strange flower he had come across in his rambles, and which he knew she would be delighted to see. Just then Will drove the cow into the barn-yard, and noticed the gun standing there in such an irresistible way. He picked it up quickly without stopping to think whether he was doing right or wrong, and then, having it in his hands, how could he help taking aim at something! Of course it wasn't loaded, and what

harm would it do? There stood old Juno in tempting proximity. "Now," thought Will, "if she was a bear, this is the way I would take aim at her—right back of her fore leg—that's the way to kill 'em quick."

Just then little Rosa came running out with something in her hand for the dear old pet. In a moment more she would be within the range of the gun. He does not see her, but he pulls the trigger quickly, and there is a blinding flash, a sharp explosion, and then a child's terrified cry! Only a terrified cry, thank God! and not a dying moan.

Will's first horrible thought was that he had shot little Rosa, but in an instant he saw, with a wild flash of joy, that she was flying into the house. Then he looked towards Juno, with a vague terrible sense of what he had done rushing over him and half-blinding him; and he saw a great red jet of blood gushing out from a wound in her side. While he looked at her she suddenly turned her head towards him with a strange expression of terror and appeal in her soft eyes. Then she slowly staggered

down on to her knees and on to her side, and with a few convulsive shudders was dead—shot through the heart!

The whole family were there in a moment in the greatest alarm. The report of the gun had crashed through the house, startling the quiet household and sending them all flying to the doors and windows. Mrs. Leonard was sewing, and the sound struck terror to her heart; then Rosa's screams added to her dreadful fright so much that she hardly had strength to reach the door and take the poor little girl up in her trembling arms. "What is it, my darling, what is it?" she said, with lips that would hardly move at her bidding.

"Will shot me," cried Rosa; "I'm all shot—ted to death!"

The mother was too much frightened to smile, and by this time Harry had sprung down the stairs up which he had gone in pursuit of Alice, and rushed by his mother and Rosa out to the barn. They all followed him with beating hearts, and then they saw the sad spectacle. Will had dropped the gun on the

ground and was kneeling down by the dead cow, calling her all the pet names he could think of between his paroxysms of sobbing. Alice gave a single glance at the scene, and went back towards the house with her hands over her face, while Harry went mechanically and picked up his gun, and then turned his shocked, distressed face away from the group.

Little Rosa struggled down from her mother's arms, and putting her arms around the dead favorite's neck, laid her little cheek down on the cow's face. "Open your eyes, Juno," she said; "here's the apple I was going to give you before Will hurted us." The little blossom had been so shielded from every sad sight and sorrowful fact that she did not know death even when in its presence.

Johanna lifted up her voice in a wild Irish wail, but suddenly seemed struck with a practical view of the case. "It's no use lamentin' and weepin'," she said, "why don't you go for your father, Master Harry, and tell him to bring the butcher wid him?"

Then Mrs. Leonard gently persuaded Rosa

to come away, and poor Will meekly followed her into the house, while Harry laid away his gun with a remorseful and self-convicted air, and then hastened down street for his father.

Will was not at all given to serious thoughts, but he had a great many that night. His forgetfulness and disobedience and dreadful carelessness rose up before him in their true colors.

The children all gathered about their mother in the twilight, while the butcher was about his dreadful business in the barn-yard.

She held little Rosa in her lap, with her arms close about her, realizing with the most painful vividness how nearly, how very nearly, her lovely little life had touched the boundary line. And feeling thus how perilous was the most guarded pathway—how near the unseen world might be the most thoughtless young spirit—how close to “cold obstruction” the little hearts that now

“Throb and beat,
With such impatient feverish heat,
Such limitless and strong desires,”

she could not find it in her own heart to say a word of reproach to Harry and Will. She thought she could safely leave all that to their own consciences.

But she comforted the sad hearts of the children over the death of poor Juno, telling them how speedy and painless it was, and how it must have come soon, even if this sad accident had not taken place. Then she spoke of little Rosa's wonderful and providential escape; and they all had to kiss the darling over and over. Mamma had commenced undressing her, and her dimpled neck and arms were all "sweet spots," but Will knelt down and, as Mary of old humbly caressed the dear sacred feet of the Master, so he covered Rosa's small bare feet with tearful kisses.

Still later she talked with them of the wonderful machinery of life, and how strange it was that a

"harp of thousand strings
Should keep in tune so long."

Aud yet how frail it was, and how easily

broken, and of what infinite importance it was to be always ready for the summons to another and Higher Life whenever it might come. "Whatever else we forget, my darlings," she said, earnestly, "let us never forget that 'the only certain thing in life is death.'"





VII.

MORE FORGETFULNESS.

WILL had such an inveterate fondness for funny pranks of all sorts, and acted so hastily always that there was often opportunities for him to repent at leisure. If he could only have learned to stop and think, even for a second, before he perpetrated some of his mischief, his memory would have been just as good as other boys; as it was he went on forgetting.

How many times his mother had said to him, "there is no fun at all in hurting or frightening any one, or in doing any damage to other people's things. It is simply trespassing on their rights, and I cannot allow you to do

so unpunished." Yet scarcely a day went over his head but that he teased Johnny, or "bothered" Johanna, or "got a joke on to" somebody! He didn't intend to hurt people very much, nor do any great harm, but fun at their expense he must have. His teachers at school had trials with him, an account of which well might fill a book, yet he was hardly ever known to do anything for which he could be arraigned and punished. They could scarcely keep a grave face while reprimanding him. If he had been perverse or sullen, or obstinate, his case could have been easily managed; but what could be done with a boy who simply warmed his hands by the glowing red hair of the boy who sat before him, or made a sleeping comrade fast to his desk with a slipping noose?

It was Will who put that little pinch of powder into good Adam Brethschneider's pipe, at the same time filling it with choice tobacco; and alas! it must be confessed, it was none other than Will who tied a band of crape to Aunt Huldah's door, when a certain vener-

able widower, in whom she was supposed to take a deep interest, astonished the people of Clear Rapids by marrying a young lady at least twenty years Aunt Huldah's junior.

One can readily imagine that a boy of such propensities would occasionally "forget" every prohibition, and indulge in unlimited mischief.

It was in June that poor old Juno met her fate. The children thought it quite a coincidence, that the same beautiful month should have given her birth and name, and—as Harry and Alice who were growing very classical, said—Metempsychosis. (To save some of my younger readers the trouble of going to the dictionary, I will tell them that this long word means "change of being.") They liked to think there was something still left of poor old Juno—somewhere.

Harry's gun grew really rusty after that; he felt for awhile as if he should never want to use it again. It lay on some hooks over the door in his room, and Will used to glance at it in passing sometimes and shudder. He certainly felt no inclination to tamper with

it again. He could not forget Juno's look of mute terror, nor Rosa's hair-breadth escape; but he had not yet learned the lesson of careful obedience to home-laws, and after a few sober days he was just Will again.

The Union-school closed the last of the month, and they were all busy getting ready for examination. Even Harry made a good use of every moment and could be heard declaiming in solitude, like a second Demosthenes. Alice was pale and nervous from excitement, over-studying and anxiety. Johnny had his Arithmetic or Geography constantly in his hand; while Will tried also to fix his volatile mind on his studies. It was fortunate for him that they had Object lessons in his room, for they were the only lessons in which he was much interested, or in which he had any prospect of distinguishing himself.

Mrs. Leonard watched over her flock with the greatest wisdom and kindness; sending Alice to bed every night at an early hour, so that if possible, she might get that best of tonics, a good night's sleep. And then after

school each day, she would send Harry or Johnny to saddle Julie and bid her little girl canter away for half an hour and cool her flushed cheeks, and tranquilize her nerves, to be ready for the evening's study.

She helped Harry by criticising his declamation and correcting his composition, and indeed, gave up her time largely to hearing and explaining lessons, and in every way aiding her children for the coming ordeal. Surely they ought to have been just what Mr. Grover told her that her "Gemini" were, "Foremost in their classes, and ornaments to the school." Johnny, too, was a good boy, and a good scholar, though not so brilliant and rapid as his older brother. It was not easy for Johnny to "tell all he knew," but he understood things before he left them.

And now as to Will. He really had begun to feel that it was his duty to study a little, and not disgrace himself and his family by his dreadful ignorance, but it was terribly hard work to study in this lovely June weather, when his eyes and his thoughts would keep

staying away out of doors; and his fixed habits of devoting himself to mischief were so hard to break. Every morning he would resolve to be just a "tip-top good boy" that day, and as his mother gave his hair a "finishing touch," and started him off for school with the charge to "be good and study hard," he would answer, "Yes, mother," with every possible good intention. Then off he would run, and very likely before he reached the school house there would be some too-tempting opportunity for mischief; some boy with his eyes on an open book, who could be tripped up; or some little luncheon basket carelessly set down that could be just slipped out of sight; or some books left about that could exchange places, and Will's good resolutions and promises vanished like early dew.

Then in school, what headway could a boy make in arithmetic whose mind was constantly straying off on to calculations of an entirely different sort, such as how those two fat little girls up there in front would look if their seat should break down; or what would be the

result if two boys in school, one with a remarkably long nose and the other with just as short a one, could effect an exchange !

Or how could a boy get a geography lesson who cared so little about it that he "forgot it just as fast as he learned it?" Those were his own words in regard to that and all his other studies ! Yet when he was detained after school to learn some imperfect lesson, it was often truly wonderful how soon he would have it ready for recitation.

The last two days of school were devoted to examinations of classes in all the departments. These were public, and Mrs. Leonard, with many other parents and interested friends, spent most of her time for both of the days in the school. Mr. Leonard, too, left his business long enough to look in and hear some of the recitations in which Harry and Alice were interested, and both father and mother felt abundantly compensated for the effort they had made. It was gratifying to know their children were receiving such excellent instruction, and were making so good progress

Harry's and Alice's clear, prompt answers showed they understood well the ground they had been over, and if Johnny spoke more slowly, he never got confused or made a failure. But Will—poor Will!—his mother felt the blood mount to her temples several times, as her youngest son rolled his black eyes about with a look of comic despair, when he was called upon to answer some simple geographical or historical question, and replied, "I've forgotten."

Then there came classes in arithmetic in Will's room, and as he was a very ready reckoner, he obtained some surprisingly quick answers in mental arithmetic. His mother brightened up perceptibly, but her spirits flagged again when, in written arithmetic, he was asked to give the rule for "long division," and fell back upon his standing explanation for ignorance—"I've forgotten it." Her crowning trial, however, came when the spelling and defining powers of this forgetful boy were put to the test. She knew he was very weak in his orthography; but, oh! could it be



possible that he did not know how to spell *fearful*? That was the first word which was given to him, and he instantly spelled it "*fcerful*," and then defined it "*scaret*." Poor Mrs. Leonard was so "*scaret*" herself that she had to use her fan vigorously!

Pretty soon he was called upon again, and this time the word was *voluble*. Of course, he spelled it with the *e* before the *l*, and when he came to the definition he had "forgot" what it was! To cap the climax, he was asked to spell *fissure*; and when he began "f-i-s-h," there was such a suppressed giggle ran around the class that he knew he was going wrong, and stopped abruptly. "I've forgotten how to spell it and what it means," he said honestly, and as if he didn't very much care if he had!

There was an elderly gentleman on the examining committee who knew Will very well, indeed, and for whom he had a high regard, unmingled with any awe. Indeed, a lack of veneration was one of Will's weak points, which his mother and father had tried in vain to strengthen. This silver-haired gentleman

took occasion, at this juncture of Will's affairs, to remark to him that he seemed to have forgotten a great deal for so young a man! Whereupon Will, forgetful of all proprieties of time and place, instantly replied, that he had "*forgotten more than some people ever knew!*"

He did not mean to be saucy in the least, but he was so in the habit of joking familiarly with this pleasant old gentleman, that he did not think how his remark sounded, or what construction might be put upon it. There was a perfect gale of laughter swept over the room, for Will's friend was a person of very limited literary attainments, if he was on an examining committee. Such things do happen sometimes! But poor Mrs. Leonard was more shocked than amazed over her boy's speech, and was very glad, indeed, when the exercises were over, a little while after, and she could hasten up to the gentleman with apologies.

When she had Will quietly at home that night she did her very best to impress upon

him what a dreadful thing it was to be so careless and forgetful. "I am utterly at a loss to know what to do with you, my child," she said. "I'm afraid you will grow up a perfect ignoramus."

"No, I won't, mother. I'm going to study most awful hard after this—you'll see now!"

But Will was always so full of good intentions!

Mrs. Leonard went on: "Oh! how could you make that speech to that nice old Mr. Temple! I was so surprised that it fairly took away my breath. How many times I have told you that you shouldn't speak to grown-up, and especially to old, persons as if they were your own age! And right there in school to!"

"I forgot," pleaded Will, humbly, and that is the way he disarmed criticism.

Then came the Fourth of July, and Will was in his glory. The smell of gunpowder was surpassingly fragrant to him, and the crackling and snapping of fire-crackers was music in his ears. He grew tremendously patriotic when

the stars and stripes were unfurled to the breeze, and all the martial spirit within his heart was deeply stirred by a fife and drum, while a cannon was to him "a thing of beauty and a joy forever."

Harry and Johnny were duly enthusiastic on the national holiday, but with Will it was a passion. Mrs. Leonard did her utmost to keep him in check, but he was very much like a bottle of lively beer—often the best thing that could be done with him was to let him foam over!

The village authorities had forbidden the use of the boys' favorite means to celebrate the day, and so there could be no throwing of torpedoes, or snapping of fire-crackers within the precincts of the village. But the boys were not to be cheated out of their fun, and arranged, since there was to be no public observance of the day, for a Young American celebration out in the suburbs. The spot they selected was the pasture I have before described, and here, on a little knoll, they mounted a small cannon, while in the grove of trees

they fixed up a table and a speaker's stand. The boys of Harry's age were all engaged in the project, as well as younger ones, and they proposed to manage the thing entirely by themselves. The way they obtained their parents' consent was by promising to have an experienced man to take charge of the firing of the cannon—then there could be no possible danger. It was going to be a strictly young bachelor affair, for when Harry proposed having the girls come, and so make a sort of pic-nic of it, his proposal was received with derision. "What, have a parcel of girls squealing and jumping every time the cannon went off, and catching on fire if a cracker happened to fall on their dresses!" not they! The idea was too absurd to be entertained for a moment. They also were unanimously of the opinion that the less dressing up there was done the better. It must be a real free. roystering good time, and if a fellow had on his best clothes, how could he be anything but an unhappy, trammelled being! They would have a game of ball, and swing, and

have just as noisy and glorious a time as they possibly could with their fire-crackers and torpedoes.

Mrs. Leonard gave to her three boys a reluctant permission to go, and, with many misgivings, put up a great basketful of sandwiches and tarts for their part of the refreshments. The boys bought lemons and sugar for lemonade with their own pocket-money, also an unlimited supply of fire-works, while their fathers furnished the powder for their cannon, on condition that they should obey strictly the orders of the man who went with them and took charge of the firing. This they all promised to do, but to make assurance doubly sure, Mr. Leonard had Adam Brethschneider go also, and stand on guard.

The day dawned clear and beautiful, though very warm. All the boys in Clear Rapids were on the *qui vive* at day-break, for they had hired the man to fire off their cannon once every half hour, beginning at sun-rise, and they could hardly be kept at home for breakfast, when the grand boom of the gun told them

that the "celebration" had commenced. But they were to assemble on the village green at nine o'clock and march in procession to the grounds, so they had to restrain their impatience.

Mr. and Mrs. Leonard let their boys go at length with many parting words of caution. "Now Harry and Johnny, we do not feel much worried about you," they said, "but pray take care of Will. It is going to be a very warm day; don't play too hard; don't drink too much ice-water and lemonade; keep away from the cannon, Will, and don't hurt or trouble any body, and be good boys all of you." These were all things that they surely needed to remember.

Away they went half crazy with joyousness, while Alice waved her handkerchief to them, and said to her mother, "I declare I half wish I was a boy!"

They made quite an imposing appearance as they marched out of the village, after going through all the principal streets. They had a drum and fife out of which they got

ever so much noise, if not music ; and they had one big flag and several small ones, while as marshal of the day Ned Wilcox rode beside the gay procession, wearing a military sash and gloves as the insignia of his office, He was mounted upon the Leonard pony, generously loaned to him for the occasion, and which Adam took in charge after they reached the grounds, and placed in a neighboring pasture.

Harry was the orator of the day, and if Fourth of July speeches were not so much of a drug in the market, I should be tempted to report his ; as it is, I will only say that he made a very clever off-hand little speech, which was listened to by the boys with a great deal more attention and appreciation than they would have bestowed upon any orator who was not of their own age. Of course he talked about our Great and Glorious Country, and made several spirited allusions to our National Bird ; and he said some things about the war and our brave soldiers, and dear old "Honest Abe," the martyred president, quoting with

really fine emphasis from Mr. Brownell's matchless poem on Abraham Lincoln--

“ Perished ?—who was it said
Our leader had passed away ?
Dead ? Our President dead ?—
He has not died for a day !

Harry also made some happy local hits that the boys cheered with the greatest enthusiasm, and he ended his oration as every young orator should, by predicting a magnificent future for the Union, and for the Great West—especially for Clear Rapids.

Then he thanked his audience for their polite attention, (he had not been disturbed by more than a dozen fire-crackers, and the only disorderly speech had been a remark from Will; when Harry was soaring considerably, in one part of his oration, this irrepressible youngster called out, “ Hold him !”) and the orator of the day descended from the platform amid storms of applause, and the roar of the cannon. The boys were either very much pleased with his speech, or very glad he had got through.

Then they tried to read the Declaration of Independence, but the thing couldn't be done, Marshal Wilcox to the contrary notwithstanding. So the assembly proceeded to the dinner. It was only about eleven o'clock, but they were ready to a man for "refreshments." If there was a spot where they missed their mothers and sisters, it was when they tried to set their luncheon in an attractive shape on the table; but this was not a thing worth bothering about, so they just abandoned the attempt and piled things up indiscriminately. There was a "committee on lemonade and ice-water," and an immense quantity was immediately prepared. They used the brook water and forgot to strain it as some of their mothers had advised, so for aught they knew they drank ever so many "polliwogs" and "skaters," but this did not give them any concern.

The dinner was a success; so were the toasts afterwards, when they drank the health of the orator of the day, and the marshal, and "The Old Folks at Home," and their sis-

ters, and their future wives, (it was a very precocious boy who thought of that!) and of Clear Rapids, and their State, and the United States, and everything else they could think of!

It seems highly probable that they forgot their mother's injunction, and drank too much!

Then the fun began. They gathered around the cannon to witness the next firing, keeping good-naturedly outside of the boundary line, which Adam had drawn according to Mr. Leonard's directions; and when it "went off," with a tremendous roar, they fairly danced with delight.

After this they ran and jumped, shouted and sang, capered and played, wrestled and climbed trees, as if the thermometer had stood at forty degrees above zero instead of ninety. The older boys showed some signs of discretion; but the younger ones were fairly beside themselves with excitement. Will, in particular, was not still for a moment, except to drink, and then he would be so thirsty that he could scarcely get water enough.



When they played ball, he was one of the "chasers." All day he flashed hither and thither, like the incarnate Will-o'-the-wisp that he was; and when he got so heated that he had to cool off, he did it by rolling up his trowsers and wading in the brook! Harry and Johnny uttered some protests against this proceeding, but he was confident that the only promise he had made his mother was about keeping away from the cannon, which promise he had kept in mind with the most remarkable fidelity. The truth was that field was too closely associated with poor old Juno for Will's peace of mind, and all day long he was haunted by her presence sufficiently to make the flash and bang of the cannon very distasteful to him.

But his torpedoes and fire-crackers lost none of their relish. He scattered them with the most lavish hand all day—or rather until his supply was exhausted. If a frog put his head inquiringly out of the water, Will instantly enlightened him with a torpedo: and a poor old mud-turtle, that he discovered among the

willows that fringed the brook, was treated to such a shower of fire-works on his shelly fort as must have reminded him of the liveliest hail-storm, mingled with thunder and lightning, that he ever experienced! More reckless and cruel still, he tied a bunch of fire crackers to an old cow's tail and then set fire to them! The poor, frightened animal went at a mad gallop across the field, and Adam felt called upon to interfere. Will assured him that he tied them to her with a long string, so that she should be a good deal more scared than hurt; but Adam forbade any more such performances, on penalty of stopping the cannonading.

At sundown, the gun was to be fired for the last time, and the boys were to immediately return home, marching in procession as they came. So at last the great, red sun dropped down behind the horizon, and received the parting salute from the cannon. The boys had had a perfectly magnificent time. No more serious accident had occurred than the stubbing of a toe or scorching of a finger.

They had all been good-natured to each other and obedient to Adam. It was really wonderful how merrily and safely the day had gone by. But they were tired enough to be ready to go home, especially as there was to be the final excitement of the marching, with flying colors and exhilarating music.

Ned and Harry went for the pony, and the "committee on refreshments" packed up the dishes and baskets, and put them into the single wagon in which Adam had brought them in the morning, and which had been standing under the trees all day, while old Prince, who had been driven in it, had spent the day in the adjacent pasture. Adam brought the steady old fellow now, and harnessed him to the wagon, while Marshal Wilcox formed his procession.

Johnny and Will were helping about the packing of the baskets, and Will saw Johnny, who was too provident a boy to ever use all his ammunition on one occasion, take out of his pocket a large bunch of fire-crackers rolled up in a brown paper, and put the

parcel carefully in an empty tin pan of theirs, and then turn a smaller one over it. "Now," thought Johnny, "that will be a good deal better way to get them home than to have them make such a great clumsy bunch in my pocket." Will had different reflections!

The procession was all ready to start—drum and fife in front, standard-bearers next, and the boys following, arranged according to their height; the little fellows bringing up the rear. Marshal Wilcox, mounted on Julie, was curvetting around, in very military fashion, looking for stragglers, and exhibiting his horsemanship.

Adam was going to drive into the village ahead of the procession, and be ready on the green to distribute the baskets to their owners; and he now stood putting the finishing-touches to the packing. Will lingered near, ostensibly helping him, but with a solemn expression on his face which was always portentous of mischief. He was just thinking how he could give old Prince a taste of the Glorious Fourth. It would be such fun just

to surprise the old fellow out of his dignity once, and make him jump and prick up his ears as he probably used to do half a century or so ago!

"Come, Will, fall into the ranks," called Ned.

"Now or never," thought Will. Adam was putting things under the seat standing at the back end of the wagon. Will, who was in front, scratched a match, raised the pan which covered Johnny's crackers, dropped into it the blazing match and shoved the pan quickly under the seat. Prince meanwhile stood with drooping head and closed eyes. In a second Will was in his place in the procession, and in about five seconds there was a tremendous rattling explosion! The effect on both Adam and Prince was terrific. The boys in telling about it afterwards, always insisted that the old man jumped about six feet right up in the air; while as to the bound which Prince gave, their estimates varied from ten feet to forty rods! Adam came to his senses in an instant, and hallooed "Whoa! whoa!"

at the top of his voice, but regardless of all commands, old Prince went by that procession like a young hurricane. No colt could have distanced or even kept pace with this ancient steed. It is said that when such a steady old animal does get frightened and run, their flight is of the swiftest, blindest, most headlong character; and certainly old Prince's answered to this description. Down the road towards the village he dashed, with Adam and the utterly demoralized procession in full pursuit. Marshal Wilcox was able to manage his horse, inasmuch as she exhibited no other emotion than that of mild astonishment.

In his mad career old Prince went over stones and stumps, strewing the road with plates and tumblers, baskets and napkins, and all the debris of the feast. Finally one of the front wheels of the wagon struck against a tree, and with a tremendous bound Prince freed himself from the wagon and flew homeward. He brought the first intelligence to the village that the celebration was over. Through the streets he tore at a mad gallop,

people getting out of the way with all possible speed. Home he went, and over the large gate with a frantic bound. The barn door stood open, and he never paused till he stood trembling and snorting in his stall.

Mrs. Leonard, Alice and Johanna all rushed out, and two or three men came running up.

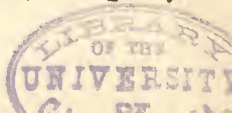
"What is the matter?" asked Mrs Leonard, eagerly, and with the greatest concern depicted in her face.

No one knew, but the men ventured to guess that the horse had "got scared at some of the boys' fireworks, most likely, and so made tracks for home."

It was but a very few moments, however, before one and another began to arrive with the news. Ned Wilcox rode up hurriedly to assure Mrs. Leonard that nobody was hurt, and no great mischief done.

Then Harry came, and half laughing and half crying, told his mother that it was all "one of Will's capers, and he ought to be whipped."

Still later came Will himself, looking very



meek and penitent, and Johnny, silently indignant.

Will was thoroughly washed and put to bed, all settlement being deferred till the next day.

"We just had the tallest time we ever had in our lives, mother," said Harry "until this happened."

"I am very glad," said the mother, "but I've been so worried all day. As to the runaway, I'm very thankful it is no worse; but what shall we do with Will?"





VIII.

WHIP POOR WILL!

THE first tidings Mr. Leonard had of the disaster was from Adam. He came into the office flushed, dusty and indignant, and speedily made Mr. Leonard acquainted with the facts of the case; "I tink," said he, in a very decided voice, "dat boy should be *vipped*."

"Certainly, he ought to be punished very severely," said Mr. Leonard, "and now, you mustn't have any more trouble about this affair. Do you go home directly, and I will attend to getting the wagon home, etc."

So Adam went home, and Mr. Leonard also, as it was just tea-time, and he wanted to

see his boys. They told him all about the day and its finale, as they sat at tea. Mrs. Leonard explained also that she had thought best to send Will directly to bed. "He was so heated and tired," she said, "that I thought it was no time to talk to him."

"That was wise," said Mr. Leonard, and then he and Harry went to the barn to give old Prince some attention. A good rubbing and supper seemed to restore him fully to his usual condition. Then they went to pick up the scattered remains along the road. The wagon proved to be not very badly broken, and, before dark, Harry and Ned Wilcox had gathered up the baskets and what was left of the dishes, etc. Fortunately the boys' mothers had shown sufficient forethought about possible damage to their crockery, and so had given them very few dishes—packing their cakes and pies mostly in baskets and pans, and giving them tin cups instead of tumblers. So the boys sorted over the tins as well as they could, and distributed them as rapidly as possible to the rightful owners.

At every place where they called, there would be inquiries made as to the accident, and several people volunteered the opinion that "the little rascal ought to be well whipped." It seemed to be the general feeling that nothing else would take the nonsense out of him! Mr. Leonard met several persons, also, who asked if the horse was hurt, and then broke out into laughter over the comical side of the affair. "Of course, you'll have to whip him, Leonard—the venturesome, little scamp!" they said; and then they would laugh again, as if whipping boys was very funny business.

Meanwhile, at home, the good mother, the sunshine of whose loving-kindness always fell on the evil and on the good, took a cup of warm tea and a slice of bread and butter up to her youngest boy. She found him awake, and he sat up, flushed and nervous, to drink the tea, but the bread he did not want. Then he turned suddenly and threw his hot arms about her neck. "You darlinest mother," he said, "is Prince hurt? Have I

killed old Prince, too?" And he began to cry.

"No, my dear, we hope he is not hurt at all; but to-morrow will tell. Now, lie down and go to sleep," she said; "to-morrow we will talk over this sad affair. Harry says you were very good about keeping away from the cannon, and I am so very glad of that! Mother has been so worried about you all day," she said kindly, and then kissed him, and went away.

Down-stairs she found Aunt Huldah, who was spending the day with a friend in the village, and so had heard of Will's performance. She called in now to see how much damage had been done, and to give her friends some good advice. If there was anything Aunt Huldah considered herself capable of advising about, it was the management of children!

"Good evening, Aunt Huldah," said Mrs. Leonard, going forward to greet her, with the little tea-tray in one hand.

"Good evening," said Aunt Huldah; and then, in a tone of unaffected kindness, "you

hain't got nobody sick here, I hope?" Sickness called out Aunt Huldah's sympathies very strongly. She had nursed her own old mother with loving care for twenty years before she died.

"No, not sick exactly," said Mrs. Leonard; "but our Will is pretty much used up to-night, so I sent him to bed early, and have now been taking him up some tea."

"Now, you don't say that's the way you treat a boy that's been cutting up such a caper as he has, do you?" exclaimed Aunt Huldah, in scornful accents.

"Well, yes, ——, sometimes," answered the mother.

"Now, I never did hear the beat of that!" said the maiden lady, slowly; and then she went on—"When I was young, and folks governed their children accordin' to Scriptor, that boy would have had a whippin' and then been sent to bed without any supper at all."

Mrs. Leonard made no answer, and Aunt Huldah pursued the theme. "You know I'm friendly to you Margaret!"

“Oh, yes,” Mrs. Leonard said gently, “she nadn’t a doubt of that—she had too many proofs of it to have a single misgiving.”

“Well, I believe you’re just spoilin’ that child by pettin’ him. He’s just a master-hand at all sorts of mischief and wickedness. There don’t skerce a day go over my head that I don’t hear of somethin’ or other that that fellow’s said or done to plague somebody. Don’t you s’pose I know who tied that black rag to my door, a year ago, when ‘Squire Jones got married to that interestin’ Miss Ferguson?”

Mrs. Leonard had never heard of this, and was betrayed into a smile, which she instantly repressed; but Aunt Huldah took occasion to cover her own mouth with her handkerchief just at this point in her lecture!

“I heard him make that speech to old Mr. Temple there in the school-house, too; and thinks I to myself, there’s a case of new-fangled respect for the aged! I wish his Grandfather Leonard had of hed the trainin’ of him for that! It would ‘a’ been the last

time he'd have been so sassy! 'Spare the rod an' spile the child,' says Solomon ——"

"Does he?" asked Mrs. Leonard, innocently

"Well, he says what amounts to that anyway," said Aunt Huldah, tossing her head; "and you're a spilin' yours, or I haint got no eyes in my face nor sense in my head!" And she rose to go, saying that "it was getting dark, and she had too much work to do to be wastin' time."

"Thank you ever so much for your call," said Mrs. Leonard, pleasantly, "and for your counsel, too. We may not always think alike, but we both mean to do right. I know I am too indulgent to my children, and I verily believe you would be if they were yours!" Then she laughed, and they shook hands as if they were mutual admirers!

Then Mrs. Leonard took the tray of dishes into the kitchen, and Johanna, who stood at the sink washing the tea-dishes, relieved her mind about Will's discipline. "Ye'll have no pace wid that b'y till he's had a sound batin'," she said; "he's kilt the cow, an' now he's

afther killin' the horse—he'll be the death of us all yet. Do you mind how he bothers me, now? It's almost kilt wid shame I was this day week when Pat O'Brien was workin' in the garden. Will comes to me, just as honest and innocent-like, an' says he, 'Please step out in the garden, Johanna, Pat wants to spake wid you.' So I wipes me hands an' puts me apron over me head, an' goes out, an' there was Pat comin' towards me, an' we stood an' looked at each other loike a pair of innocents, neither one of us wid a word to say! Purty soon, says I, 'What will you be wantin' of me, pray?' An' sez he, growin' very red in the face, 'What was *you* afther sendin' out to *me* for?' Thin I knew it was all Will's doin's! But, whin I asked him, what did he tell sich lies for? says he, 'An' *didn't* ye want to spake wid each other?' Sure an' its batin' he deserves, mum."

Later in the evening the father and mother talked over the case together.

"I am very much puzzled to know what is best to do with him," said the father. "Every

body seems to think he ought to be whipped just as you say Aunt Huldah does."

"Yes," said the mother sadly, "I know that is what most people would advise; but I have always proceeded on the idea that only obstinacy and willfulness should be dealt with in that extreme way. It doesn't seem just the thing to whip a child who is ready to beg forgiveness and promise good behavior, does it?"

"It certainly does not," said the father; "but something must be done to check this reckless propensity to mischief—something that he will feel and remember. He must not go on in this way."

"Yes," the mother said, a little wearily; "how many, many times I have thought and said that!"

Then they committed their cares and anxieties to the Infinite Father, and tried to sleep; but Mrs. Leonard found it quite impossible, after all the worriment of the day, to close her eyes; and, to add to her causes of wakefulness, right under her chamber window a little

bird perched itself and sang, with tremendous energy, "Whip-poor-will! Whip-poor-will." The familiar little cry, which she had listened to a thousand times before without the least annoyance, and often with real enjoyment, now sounded dolefully enough. She even got up, and, raising the window softly, drove away the little creature who was thus unconsciously echoing her thoughts; but scarcely was her head on the pillow again, when loud and shrill rose that dismal refrain, "Whip-poor-will! Whip-poor-will!"

She was so tired and nervous that the tears began to flow, when she was startled into a scream by a little white apparition stumbling into the room. It proved to be Johnny, and he quickly made his errand known. "Do come and see what ails Will, he keeps throwing the clothes off and talking, and I can't wake him up at all."

Mrs. Leonard threw on her wrapper, lighted a lamp, and went quickly across the hall into the boys' room. In a moment she came back and spoke to her husband. "Oh, John!"

she said, "do come and see how very sick Will is, I have never seen one of the children so sick."

They spent the rest of the night bathing the hot head and trying to soothe and quiet the poor child, who tossed and moaned and talked incoherently, in spite of their tender nursing.

"If he is not better by daylight," said the father, "I will go directly for Dr. Myers; but I am almost sure this fever will pass off with the night."

The morning brought no improvement, however, and Dr. Myers came and looked grave as the sad-faced mother herself. "It is a very violent attack," he said, "and his brain seems seriously affected. I will do all that I can for him; but it is upon good nursing that his recovery will largely depend."

Then followed days and weeks of dreadful sickness, such as had never before thrown its dark shadow over this sunny home. The physician attributed it to the wild imprudence and excitement of the fourth of July, and

surely he had sufficient reason for doing so. After a little the fever assumed a typhoidal form, and seemed beyond control. Fortunately for them all, Dr. Myers was a wise and enlightened physician, who prescribed abundance of fresh air, pure cold water, and careful nursing, and administered medicine with the most judicious limitation. Still more fortunately, Mrs. Leonard was a gentle, quiet, sensible nurse, who followed the doctor's directions carefully, but at the same time used her own good judgment in many instances. Above all, who kept her own deep anxiety locked in her heart, and turned towards the suffering boy always a calm, sweet, loving face.

She had many helps in her great task, but still the burden of care in the sick room necessarily fell far more heavily upon her than on any one else. She was the only one whom the great wild distressed eyes of the poor boy seemed to recognize, and, if missing, to search for with the most pathetic pleading. So she did not leave him at all, but caught little

snatches of sleep and rest on a low couch by the side of his bed. Others watched awhile and then went away and slept—she watched always.

Mr. Leonard left all the business at the mill in Adam's charge, and did only the most pressingly needful office-work. All the rest of his time he spent at home, doing everything in his power for his darling boy. But try as hard as he might he could not steady his nerves, or disguise his anxiety like the mother, and poor Will would grow restless and excited under his nursing.

Alice was her mother's second self, but she was too young and too easily excited to do a great deal, while Harry and Johnny could only hover about with distressed faces and the best of intentions.

Johanna was a "host" in the kitchen, bearing every added burden with the most cheerful zeal, and developing undreamed of capabilities in the culinary way, but the sick-room was to her a perfect limbo of horrors. If she glanced in, she could not keep from breaking

out into a sympathetic cry, and if she so much as passsd the door, she expected to see poor Will's little wraith suddenly become disembodied and glide towards her. His delirious talk shocked her terribly. Once as she looked in for a moment he opened his eyes, and looking straight at her, said, "Poor old Prince! Poor old Prince! Did I scare you awfully?"

Poor Johanna fled in dismay, with her apron over her head, and her hands over her ears. This being taken for old Prince, and the piteous sound of Will's weak voice, together with his touching words, proved too much for her excitable nerves; she had violent hysterics, and had to have medical attention herself.

Aunt Huldah now was a tower of strength. She came the day after Will was taken sick, and quietly putting away her bonnet and shawl, took possession. She proved as gentle and self-possessed as Mrs. Leonard; and as to strength and endurance, she came very near proving that she was "made up," as in former times she had often indignantly asserted that some of her patrons thought, of "whale-

bone and India-rubber." When she found that Will seemed a little disturbed if she sat down beside his bed instead of his mother; so far from taking offence, she simply remarked, that she never thought of blaming folks for not likin' her looks—she never liked them herself—and she would post herself out of sight at the head of the bed, and standing there like a statue, would softly brush her great breezy fan of turkey-feathers to and fro, till the hot cheeks grew cooler, and the quick, hard breathing more natural. She could make the most delicious water-gruel, and her chicken broth and beef-tea were incomparable. Above all, her whole soul was in her work, and her strong sympathies took in the whole household. She knew just when a cup of tea would do Mrs. Leonard a world of good; she would drive Alice away for a walk, or send the boys out into the sunshine with the charge, "don't show them white faces of yourn round here again till you've got some color in 'em. We shall have you all sick next;" and she would slip out into the hall when she heard



Mr. Leonard's footsteps, to tell him that "the child certainly was better, anyway he wasn't worse, and he must keep up his courage," and he would press her bony old hand with tears of gratitude in his eyes.

They all recognized then the fact that though Aunt Huldah was—

"A creature not too bright and good
For human nature's daily food,"

she was—

"Yet a spirit still and bright,
With something of an angel light."

Early in Will's sickness she took Mrs. Leonard aside and relieved her mind on one point. "I hope you didn't mind nothing about that talk of mine the other night," she said; "I've been ashamed of it ever since. If you don't know how to bring up children, nobody does; and he's the smartest an' likeliest child you've got. I aint makin' light of the rest of 'em neither." Then she looked very much in earnest as she added reverently, "God willing, we'll take him safely through this."

It was wonderful how kind and sympathizing everybody was. Will had not lived his nine years of out-gushing, overflowing, love-abounding life in vain. Everybody knew him, and everybody, in spite of all his roguishness, liked him. The doctor came early and late, making many a call of which no mention was made in his day-book. Adam never failed to stop morning and evening, to ask for the sick boy, and devoted himself unremittingly to the business, so that Mr. Leonard might have the more freedom; while his good old wife, Christine, brought over every day a great bunch of pinks, to brighten and make fragrant the sick-room. Both Adam and his wife would have gladly shared in the nursing if there had been any opportunity. "He is most dear to me," said Christine to Mrs. Leonard; and then, with a heart-break in her voice, "I would care for him as I did for my own little Hans."

But Mrs. Leonard could only thank her with tearful eyes; they had more help than they knew what to do with; the neighbors, the teachers, everybody was so good, so kind.

Still every drop of water, every tea-spoonful of medicine or food must come from "mamma," as he called her, now that his mind was so weak and wandering. It was almost the only rational word that he spoke for four long sorrowful weeks.

How wan and weak he looked! He had never had a pound of superfluous flesh, but now his very skin seemed the thinnest possible covering for his bones, while his great eyes looked larger and blacker than ever. His thick black hair had been cut off, and there he lay like a little helpless baby once more, and he was so light that his mother could take him up easily in her loving arms, while Aunt Huldah made the bed up freshly.

Day after day they lived as under the shadow of Azrael's wing; day after day he breathed on, while they watched and hoped and prayed.

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble," read the father, at family prayers, and they all realized the truth of the sacred words.

By and by the quiet light of reason came back into his eyes. Aunt Huldah was at her usual post looking over his head, and he opened his eyes, turning his head back a little on the pillow. "Why Aunt Huldah," he whispered, smiling. After she had dropped down on her knees a minute, and wiped her eyes, she came around beside him, bright and smiling too.

After that Will got well wonderfully fast, but it took more wisdom, as the doctor said, to take care of him than it ever did before. He was so happy and so hungry, so glad to see every body and have every body stay, so grateful and so genial. But oh! most joyful fact, he was not so forgetful! He was most meekly and sweetly obedient, even in the matter of eating and talking; and what stronger proof could be given of a docile spirit?

The truth was, Will remembered, as his mind grew stronger, all about the causes of his sickness, and he had a most unusual number of connected thoughts as he lay there, too weak to raise his head unaided. Still more of

them came when he could sit propped up in the rocking-chair, and think for five minutes without having the head-ache. He remembered how mischievous and troublesome he had always been—how forgetful of his friends' wishes and directions, and of his own promises—how careless of everything but fun and frolic. He thought of his mother and father and all the loved ones at home, who had been so lavishly kind to him now in his sickness, and the tears sprang up into his eyes. He thought too, of his Infinitely loving Friend, who had spared his life and surrounded it with such tender mercy, yet whom he had forgotten always, and the tears ran over.

Oh! what a joyful household it was, now that the awful shadow was lifted! They all went about with such light, happy, thankful hearts, and were so anxious to show their love for Will. Harry and Alice read to him and amused him with the most thoughtful kindness. Johnny played checkers and fox-and-geese with him, and quite astonished them all

with his demonstrations of affection, while little Rosa "fixed" the scattered remnants of his hair in her very best style. Will loved to feel her soft little fingers going here and there over his head; he said it felt as rain drops on the roof sounded.

There was really very little opportunity for him to use the solitaire board, which Robby Noble brought in to him. A less solitary invalid there never was.

As to the whipping which he was thought so urgently to need, there never was any mention made of it afterward by any of those who recommended it, except by the bird. He has not abandoned the idea yet!

Will himself spoke of it once, while he yet lay wan and pale on his little bed. Aunt Huldah was sitting beside him, gently rubbing the nervous weariness out of what was left of his arms. "Dear old Aunty," he said, "I heard you that night you told mother I ought to be whipped, and I thought it was just so; but I wasn't the least bit afraid they would whip me, for my father ain't the man to whip

a fellow when he is most awful sorry already. Nor you ain't either, Auntie—I know you !”

Aunt Huldah kissed him.





IX.

A LETTER.

FAR away among the Rocky Mountains Colonel Harold Willoughby sits reading in his room, in the officers' barracks of Fort —.

He breaks the seal of a letter from Clear Rapids, addressed to him in his sister Margaret's clear, beautiful hand-writing. An expression of great pleasure lights up his face when the letter is first handed to him, and, when he reads it this look grows deeper still

This is the letter :

“CLEAR RAPIDS, *Oct. 1st*, 1866.

“MY OWN DEAR HAROLD,—Did ever three

whole months go by before this without my writing to you? I think not. But I have not allowed myself to worry about this seeming neglect of mine, because I knew you understood its cause. I did not let the children write to you when Will was so sick, because I could not bear to have you distressed with unavailing anxiety and suspense. Your loving, earnest prayers I know we have always, and those were all you could have given us in our time of sore distress.

“When Will grew better, I found myself entirely exhausted, and so I had to take my turn at being nursed and waited upon. I have, by no means, been sick in the way that poor Will was, but in a very quiet, painless manner—a sort of general prostration, which I could not shake off, and yet which only required time and rest to make right again. Now, with the frosty air and bracing Autumn weather to act as tonics upon me, I am feeling quite myself, and I have taken out my portfolio this morning to give myself the delightful treat of talking to you. When Will was

getting well, a piece of beef-steak often seemed to him the one chief, earthly good—just so now-a-days I often ‘hanker’ after a talk with you. Ah, if this were not such a world of separations! But then, if it were not, we should scarcely look forward with such bright anticipation to ‘our Father’s house in the skies.’

“Ten thousand thanks for your frequent and delightful letters. They are always more welcome than words can tell; but, when I was sick, they were more than ever precious.

“Your graphic descriptions of Rocky-Mountain scenery have made us all extremely anxious to have the great Pacific Railroad built, for we are fully of the mind that we shall all want to see the Rocky Mountains before we do the Alps; and, of course, like all other properly ambitious Americans, we expect to go ‘Abroad’ before we get blind! Our pecuniary prospects have brightened up so much of late that who knows but I may yet realize some of the dreams of my youth? You will get a year or two’s leave of absence,

won't you, and go with us when we get ready to start?

"I shall take all the children!

"You may think I am not like Mrs. John Gilpin, who you remember,

" ' Though she was on pleasure bent,
Yet had a frugal mind !'

.

"But you see that would be the most economical way in the long-run; for if I had them all with me I would stay long enough so that I shouldn't have to go again.

"It seems charming enough to me, Harold dear, to have my spirits go soaring off in the old, lightsome fashion. This has been such a serious, care-laden summer, yet I have realized, as never before, how

" ' The fountain of joy is fed by tears,
And love is lit by the breath of sighs ;
The deepest griefs and the wildest fears
Have holiest ministries.'

"Will's sickness developed such a world of tenderness in us all. I have always known

that my own heart was overflowing with love for my darlings, but I have never realized how my husband's life was fairly bound up in each one. The poor man has had such a dreadfully busy life, that it has often cramped and repressed the outward expression of his feelings; but the fountain has been unsealed during these days of trial.

“The children, too, were perfectly devoted to Will, and to each other and to us. We found ourselves all drawn so closely together in the shades of the Valley of the Shadow of Death. There, too, we ‘touched God's right hand in the darkness.’

“It was wonderful how good and sympathizing everybody has been. I shall surely never find it hard, while I live in Clear Rapids, to ‘love my neighbor as myself.’ I am really oppressed with humility when I think of it all. What have we ever done that should call out such a wealth of loving-kindness? I have been overwhelmed with it, as I have often felt in regard to the Divine love, which has always so graciously infolded us

all. How inexpressibly beautiful that will seem, when we realize it in all its fullness, if the earthly reflection of it is so lovely !

“ You remember Aunt Huldah ? She stayed with us through all our trouble, and was like a ministering angel. Such an experience teaches one to forever bear in mind—

“ ‘ How underneath wintry snows,
The invisible hearts of flowers
Grow ripe for blossoming,
And the lives that seem so cold,
May be cast in gentlest mold,
May be full of love and Spring !’

“ We will never misjudge Aunt Huldah again.

“ The best and happiest result of this terrible sickness of Will’s is in the dear boy himself. He is flying about now in perfect health, and, if possible, in more exuberant spirits than of old ; but there is one great difference, that now he stops to think before he launches out into any mad-cap performance. He tries to remember what things have been forbidden, and to be obedient. Of course, he forgets

sometimes ; but there is, after all, a most decided improvement. He has all his old outbursts of love to everybody and everything ; but he seems to keep also an *abiding* consciousness of his *duties* to those he loves so dearly. The other day he said to me—‘ When I feel like plaguing anybody, I just think how they treated me when I was sick, and I get over it quicker than lightning.’

“ All our dear boys and girls are growing finely—growing evenly, I hope—mind and heart and body. ‘ My cup runneth over.’ ”

“ Harry and Alice write to you so often, and give you so many of the details of our home-life, that there is not much new left for me to tell you.

“ We all think of you, and talk of you so often and so lovingly ! Harry’s watch reminds him of you unceasingly ; and I don’t think Alice ever mounts her pony—the dear pony, she is just one of us !—without sending a grateful thought westward.

“ When you come again—may it be soon !—I hope you will see, at a glance, the beautiful

golden harvest which is growing from the good seed sown here by your kind and lavish hand.

"Now, here comes my Rose-bud to shed some of her fragrance into mamma's letter !

" 'It is to Uncle Harold,' she says, 'I know, because there is so much of it. Give him a great big love from me, so big as this (and she stretches her arms to their widest extent), and kisses, so high (here she goes up on tip-toe, and reaches up as far as she can), and forty hugs like this (and here she nearly squeezed the breath out of me), and tell him I can ride on Julie all *my lone*, and nobody holding me on !'

"Now, if I could just send her look, and her voice, with her words, how you would appreciate them all !

"But I must put my own 'great big love' with my Rosa's, and my husband's, too, he says. He has just come home to dinner. And here comes all the hungry, jolly, loving troop—a somewhat overwhelming influx of sunshine and fresh air, of joyous clamor, and sweet, eager young life.

“ My letter must come to an end, with all their added loves. (It is well that this is not appreciable by post-office scales, or what a number of stamps my letter would demand ;) I will say good-bye—dear old English phrase! good-bye, and again good-bye !

“ Ever your loving sister,

“ MARGARET W. LEONARD.”









